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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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PHOTO: PTI

PM to visit UK, Maldives next week

NEW DELHI, 19 JULY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will undertake a two-nation visit to the United Kingdom and the Maldives from 23 to 26 July to strengthen diplomatic and economic ties. In the UK (23–24 July), he will sign the long-awaited India–UK Free Trade Agreement, reducing tariffs on 99 per cent of Indian exports and boosting British exports like whisky and cars. This landmark deal follows three years of negotiations aimed at enhancing market access and bilateral cooperation. On 25–26 July, Modi will visit the Maldives as Chief Guest at its 60th National Day celebrations—his first trip under President Mohamed Muizzu's administration. The visit seeks to rebuild strained ties, reaffirm India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy, and reinforce regional stability in the Indian Ocean amid growing Chinese influence. *—Agencies*

Body of man killed in Niger attack to be brought back

RANCHI, 19 JULY

An Indian migrant worker from Jharkhand, Ganesh Karmali, 39, was killed in a terrorist attack in Niger's Dosso region on 15 July. A resident of Karipani village in Bokaro district, Karmali worked for Transrail Lighting Limited. He died in crossfire between police and terrorists, about 130km from the capital, Niamey. His body has been handed over to the Indian Embassy, and efforts are underway to repatriate it within a week. Bokaro officials have requested Rs 50 lakh compensation from the company, while the Jharkhand government will provide Rs 5 lakh under the International Migrant Workers' Security Scheme. According to the Indian Embassy, one Indian was killed, another abducted, and a third remains missing in the attack. *—PTI*

5 jets shot down during India-Pakistan conflict: Trump

Trump again threatens 10% tariffs on BRICS

WASHINGTON DC / NEW YORK, 19 JULY

US President Donald Trump has reiterated his claim of ending the May conflict between India and Pakistan, asserting that "five jets were shot down" before tensions de-escalated due to his intervention. Speaking at a White House dinner with Republican senators on Friday, Trump said the situation was "getting worse and worse" before the US stepped in.

"You had India, Pakistan... planes were being shot out of the air—four or five. That was looking like it was going to go. These are two serious nuclear countries," Trump said. He claimed the US used a proposed trade deal to pressure both countries into halting hostilities: "We said, 'We're not making a trade deal if you're going to be throwing around weapons.'"

India has consistently dismissed Trump's mediation claims, stating the conflict ended through direct military-level talks. The clashes followed India's Operation Sindoor on 7 May in response to the Pahalgam terror attack, claimed by The Resistance Front (TRF), linked to Lashkar-e-Taiba. Hostilities ended on 10 May.

On Thursday, the US designated TRF as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation and a Specially Designated Global Terrorist. India welcomed the move.

Separately, Trump has threatened 10% tariffs on goods from BRICS nations over attempts to undermine the US dollar. At a White House event where he signed cryptocurrency legislation into law, Trump said: "BRICS wanted to take over the dollar. That's not going to happen."

He claimed his warning led to poor attendance at a recent BRICS meeting, adding, "They didn't want to be tariffed."

The BRICS bloc—now including Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the UAE—has debated using local currencies for trade. India clarified on 17 July that "de-dollarisation" is not on BRICS' agenda.

Trump warned of further tariffs from 1 August if trade agreements aren't reached. *—PTI*

Indian pilots sue Reuters, WSJ over AI-171 coverage

FIP President Captain CS Randhawa said the publications' reporting was not based on factual content *PHOTO: ANI*

NEW DELHI/MUMBAI, 19 JULY

The Federation of Indian Pilots (FIP) has served a legal notice to Reuters and The Wall Street Journal (WSJ), accusing them of publishing speculative and misleading reports on the Air India AI-171 crash, which claimed 260 lives in Ahmedabad on 12 June.

FIP President Captain CS Randhawa said the publications' reporting was not based on factual content from the preliminary report issued by India's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB). "How can they blame the pilots based on an incomplete report? They are not the investigating authority," Randhawa told ANI.

In a formal email, the FIP criticised the international media for drawing conclusions without official confirmation. The Federation demanded both Reuters and WSJ issue an apology, amend the articles dated 17 July, and include clear disclaimers. "We are instructed to place on record that this speculative content has caused irreparable harm to the reputation of the deceased pilots and inflicted unnecessary distress on their families," the FIP wrote, warning of legal consequences for non-compliance.

The US National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), which is supporting the investigation, also rebuked the media's premature reporting. Chairwoman Jennifer Homendy urged restraint, noting: "Investigations of this magnitude take time. All questions should be addressed to the AAIB." *—PTI*

Hyderabad-Phuket AI Express flight returns due to snag

HYDERABAD, 19 JULY

An Air India Express flight (IX 110) from Hyderabad to Phuket on Saturday returned to its origin shortly after it took off due to technical snag, Rajiv Gandhi International Airport sources said.

The aircraft, Boeing 737 Max 8, which was carrying 98 passengers, landed safely back at 6.57am, they said.

An alternative aircraft was arranged, and the flight has since departed. Refreshments were provided to guests during the delay, the official further said.

According to flightradar24.com website, the flight took off at 6.40am but landed back a few minutes after it took off from Hyderabad Airport. It took off again at 1.26pm for Phuket, Thailand. *—PTI*

China starts building world's largest dam on Brahmaputra in Tibet

BEIJING/NEW DELHI, 19 JULY

China has officially begun construction of a massive $167 billion hydropower project on the Yarlung Tsangpo River in southeastern Tibet—known as the Brahmaputra in India—triggering serious concerns in downstream countries, particularly India and Bangladesh.

Chinese Premier Li Qiang inaugurated the project on Saturday in Nyingchi, close to the Indian border, according to state-run Xinhua. Developed by the newly formed China Yajiang Group, the project will consist of five cascade dams, with most electricity slated for export outside the region. The facility's full capacity remains undisclosed.

India, a downstream riparian state, has expressed apprehension over the dam's ecological and strategic implications. New Delhi has reiterated the need for transparency and consultation on trans-border river projects. The matter was raised with China as early as December 2024, and again during Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri's visit to Beijing in January.

Minister of State for External Affairs, Kirti Vardhan Singh, informed Parliament in March that India consistently urges China to ensure no harm is caused to downstream interests. The issue is being pursued through the institutionalised Expert Level Mechanism and diplomatic channels.

The river cuts through a highly biodiverse and geologically sensitive region, raising alarms among environmentalists. Earlier this week, EAM S Jaishankar met President Xi Jinping and Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing, underlining India's desire for a long-term, respectful, and mutually sensitive approach to bilateral ties. *—Agencies*

INVITES SUGGESTIONS

Karnataka govt proposes 5 City corporations under GBA

BENGALURU, 19 JULY

Karnataka government has proposed the creation of five city corporations under the Greater Bengaluru Area and invited public suggestions or objections within 30 days.

The proposed corporations are Bengaluru West, South, North, East, and Central City Corporations. The move follows the implementation of the Greater Bengaluru Governance Act, 2024, which came into effect on May 15 and allows for the creation of up to seven city corporations within the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) limits.

According to the Urban Development Department, the proposal considers factors such as population, area, density, revenue, employment in non-agricultural sectors, and infrastructure. The public can submit feedback within 30 days of the notification's publication in the official Gazette.

The Act also mandates the formation of a Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) for coordination and oversight. The GBA will be chaired by the Chief Minister as the ex-officio chairperson, with the Bengaluru Development Minister as vice-chairperson.

The Greater Bengaluru Governance Bill, passed earlier this year despite BJP opposition, also introduces 30-month terms for Mayors and Deputy Mayors in the restructured corporations. *—PTI*

The incident occurred on the Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway while Shivakumar was returning to Bengaluru *PHOTO: SALAR*

4 hurt after DKS' escort vehicle topples in Mandya

BENGALURU, 19 JULY

An escort vehicle in the convoy of Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar overturned near Gowdahalli in Mandya district on Saturday, causing minor injuries to four personnel. The incident occurred on the Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway while Shivakumar was returning to Bengaluru after attending the Sadhana Samavesha event in Mysuru.

The escort vehicle, following the Deputy Chief Minister's car, reportedly hit a road divider and overturned. Fortunately, Shivakumar's vehicle was unharmed, and he continued his journey without incident. The injured personnel were swiftly taken to a hospital in Mysuru and are reported to be in stable condition.

The mishap took place within the Srirangapatna police jurisdiction on one of the state's busiest expressways. Though accidents on the route are not uncommon, the involvement of a senior political figure's convoy has drawn considerable public and media attention.

Authorities are investigating the exact cause, which may involve road conditions, speed, or driver lapse. While no official statement has been released by Shivakumar's office, the incident has sparked renewed debate around road safety and convoy protocols. *—Salar News*

Justice Bakhru sworn in as K'taka HC Chief Justice

BENGALURU, 19 JULY

Justice Vibhu Bakhru was sworn in as the Chief Justice of the Karnataka High Court on Saturday.

Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot administered oath of office to the new CJ at a ceremony held at the Raj Bhavan's glass house here.

Prior to this, Justice Bakhru, 59, served as a Judge at the Delhi High Court.

His elevation as the Chief Justice of Karnataka HC was based on the recommendations made by the Supreme Court collegium to the central government.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and Chairman of the Karnataka Legislative Council Basavaraj Horatianwere present at the event. *—PTI*

Justice Vibhu Bakhru sworn in as the Chief Justice of the Karnataka HC in the presence of CM Siddaramaiah at Raj Bhavan in Bengaluru *PHOTO: SALAR*

OVER TICKET ISSUE

Jawan punched, kicked by Kanwariyas in UP

MIRZAPUR, 19 JULY

In a shocking incident at Uttar Pradesh's Mirzapur railway station, a CRPF personnel was brutally assaulted by a group of Kanwariyas following a dispute over a train ticket. The incident occurred around 9:30 am on Saturday as the jawan waited to board the Brahmaputra Mail.

According to police reports, an argument broke out between the jawan and several saffron-clad Kanwariyas — devotees undertaking the Kanwar Yatra — regarding ticket purchase. Viral video footage shows the jawan being surrounded, pulled, punched, and kicked by at least eight men. When he tried to retaliate, he was overpowered, thrown to the ground, and assaulted again as bystanders attempted to intervene.

Viral video footage shows the jawan being surrounded, pulled, punched, and kicked by at least eight men *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

Despite being helped to his feet, the jawan was once more attacked when he approached the group. One of the Kanwariyas slapped him before others joined in, again throwing him down and kicking him repeatedly. Railway Police Force Inspector Chaman Singh Tomar confirmed that seven people were taken into custody. "A case has been registered, and further investigation is underway," he stated.

The video has sparked widespread outrage, raising serious concerns over law enforcement and crowd control during the ongoing Kanwar Yatra, which runs from 11 to 23 July.

In a separate incident, a 31-year-old man was arrested in Ghaziabad for creating a nuisance along the yatra route. Schools in the region remain closed till 23 July amid heightened security measures. *—Agencies*

4-year-old raped in school van by driver in Lucknow

LUCKNOW, 19 JULY

A four-year-old girl was allegedly raped by her school van driver inside the vehicle in Lucknow's Indira Nagar on Monday. Police have since apprehended the accused, Mohammad Arif, and remanded him to judicial custody.

Arif allegedly raped the girl while she alone in the van, while on the way to school. The girl, through gestures, reported the incident to her mother.

"My child complained of pain in her private parts. On examination, I found that she had suffered an injury," the mother said.

The mother then informed the school authorities, who promised action. She also took the girl to a doctor, who confirmed that the girl had been sexually violated and "something was inserted in her private parts".

"I waited for two days but no action was taken by the school and the driver called again to pick the child for school. When we confronted him, he harassed us in front of the school and made casteist remarks. We were threatened with abduction. Even the school also asked us not to complain," the mother added. Arif also allegedly threatened the mother, warning that her daughter would "disappear" if a complaint was filed. *—Agencies*

PHOTO: X

Gang attacks youth with swords in Belagavi

BELAGAVI, 19 JULY

An 18-year-old youth has been attacked by a gang of 10 people with swords after a religious procession in Belagavi. The victim, Rehan Islam Mujawar, hailing from New Gandhi area, was attacked in Kasai Galli area at around 11pm on 18 July. Initial investigations revealed the attack was a result of old rivalry. Rehan had been reportedly standing on the road after the Koudi Peer (children's Muharram procession) that was held at night, when the assailants attacked him. He sustained injuries on his head and back. He was admitted to the Belagavi Institute of Medical Sciences. Police Commissioner Bhushan Borase, DCP Narayan Baramani visited the hospital. Police are investigating the matter. *—Salar News*

Belagavi DC's car seized for violating court order

BELAGAVI, 19 JULY

In a significant ruling, the official car of Deputy Commissioner Mohammed Roshan was confiscated on Friday evening due to the government's failure to comply with a court order. Advocate OB Joshi, representing the petitioner, supervised the seizure under the directive of a Belagavi civil court. The action stemmed from the government's non-payment of Rs 1.31 crore owed to contractor Narayan Kamath for constructing a barrage across the Doodhganga river. Awarded the contract in 1992-93, Kamath faced funding delays and approached the court in 1995 after the government failed to provide its dues. After a re-evaluation, the lower court mandated that 50 per cent of the outstanding amount be paid by June 2025. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: X @BABASAVARAJA

Byrathi questioned for 3 hours in rowdy murder case

BENGALURU, 19 JULY

BJP MLA Byrathi Basavaraj, who is accused in the murder of a rowdy-sheeter-turned-realtor was on Saturday questioned for over three hours in connection with the case, police said. Shivaprakash alias Biklu Shivu, 40, was hacked to death at Bharathi Nagar in the city on Tuesday night, they said. Five people have already been arrested in the case --- Jagadish, Kiran, Vimal, Anil and Fredrick, police said. Speaking later, Basavaraj said, "I have cooperated. Police have told me that I will be called again." He joined the investigation following a direction issued by the State High Court asking the MLA to appear for questioning. *—PTI*

Yadgir: Three farmers die due to electrocution

YADGIR, 19 JULY

Three people working in an agricultural field in Sadaba village died on Friday after being electrocuted. The deceased have been identified as Eerappa, 40, Suresh, 23, and Devu Agatirtha, 30. The incident occurred when one of them accidentally stepped on a live service wire near a transformer and suffered an electric shock. Another person who rushed to rescue him was also electrocuted. The third individual, who tried to save both, also died on the spot due to the electric shock. Among the deceased, two were residents of Sadaba and one was from Agatirtha Camp. *—Salar News*

Cong launches Rs 2K cr projects in Mysuru

CM challenges BJP, JD(S) to a debate; Kharge says PM, RSS is murdering the Constitution

MYSURU, 19 JULY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and AICC President Malikarjun Kharge inaugurated a slew of development works worth Rs 2,578 crores in Mysuru. The massive 'Sadhana Samavesha' event on Saturday attracted thousands of supporters, coming nearly a year after BJP-JD(S) padayatra in the city, when Siddaramaiah was embroiled in the MUDA scam.

Speaking at Maharaja's College Grounds, Siddaramaiah, said the convention was not to show the strength of his government, but to showcase his achievements to public and Opposition parties.

"Let the BJP and JD(S) explain their contributions during their tenure to the people of Mysore instead of making allegations against the Congress government with jaundiced eyes," he said. He added that the number of JD(S) members have steadily declined after he quit the party.

He challenged the Opposition parties to a debate.

"The BJP and JD(S) make false allegations. I have said several times that for you to know the truth and to stop lying or misleading people, all of you should come to one stage. If the BJP and JD(S) leaders come to one stage, I'm ready to come. Let's debate what we have done and what you have done," Siddaramaiah said.

Siddaramaiah attacked State BJP MPs in the Centre like Union Ministers HD Kumaraswamy, Prahlad Joshi and former chief minister Basavaraj Bommai for not raising their voice before the Union government over the alleged injustice in the allocation of funds.

Kharge, meanwhile, said that the RSS was "murdering" the Constitution.

"BJP and RSS are talking about amending or rewriting the Constitution. If you (people) allow them to change the Constitution, you will not have any rights," Kharge said.

"Modi, you bowed to the Constitution before entering the Parliament, but today (you are) murdering the same Constitution," he added.

State Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar during the inauguration and foundation stone laying ceremony of various developmental projects in Mysuru on Saturday

PHOTO: PTI

Kharge lauded Siddaramaiah, ministers, legislators and party workers for their "collective leadership" in implementing the five guarantee schemes. "In my Congress party there are people who perform, while in Modi's BJP, people only speak or criticise."

Kharge refuted claims that the State government was "bankrupt" and asked, "If the government was bankrupt would it have given Rs 50 crore to each MLA for developmental work in their constituencies?"

Kharge added that the Chief Minister had a special love for his home district, which is why he sanctioned the funds.

Urging the Modi government at the Centre to release State's share of funds, Kharge said, "Give us our money, it is not your money, it is our money paid by us in the form of taxes/ GST."

Shivakumar, in his speech, said the BJP was copying the Congress' guarantee schemes in other states.

"The BJP which criticised us for implementing guarantee schemes in Karnataka is now copying our schemes in other states. Congress government's development works are visible to the people in the state. Criticisms die but good work remains forever," he said. "Everyone in BJP, including the Prime Minister, said that the State would go bankrupt if the guarantee schemes were implemented. Yet, the BJP went to the extent of announcing its guarantee schemes even before the Congress party did so during elections in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Delhi and Haryana. It is now copying our schemes in Bihar too".

"We don't do politics on emotions but our politics is about livelihood," he quipped.

—Salar News with Agencies

MONSOON JOYS

Bengalureans witnessed monsoon rains across in the City on Saturday

PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ASAD

Cong is following BJP-model on MLA fund allocation: HM

BENGALURU, 19 JULY

With the Opposition parties alleging discrimination in the allocation of development funds to constituencies represented by their MLAs, State Home Minister G Parameshwara on Saturday said the Congress government is following the precedent set by the previous BJP regime.

Ruling out any "revenge politics," he said, funds will be allocated based on the developmental needs of constituencies.

"They (BJP- JD(S)) are the ones who started this practice during the previous government. Then, the ruling party MLAs were given one amount, and the Opposition MLAs were given a different amount," Parameshwara said. "They had given Rs 50 crore to their MLAs, while we (Congress MLAs) were given Rs 25 crore, Rs 20 crore, or even Rs 10 crore. We are following the same system" .

He added, "In relatively developed constituencies, a smaller amount will be provided. This is the yardstick we will follow".

On the Darmashtala mass burials, he said the government will decide on an SIT later "When a preliminary inquiry is ongoing, why is there a demand for an SIT? What is the police department for then?" *—PTI*

Ashoka terms the tunnel road project 'urban mutilation'

BENGALURU, 19 JULY

BJP leader R Ashoka has vehemently attacked State Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar over a contentious tunnel road project in Bengaluru, branding it a "monument to political arrogance, ego, and corruption." Ashoka claimed the project threatens to devastate the city's cherished heritage and green spaces, including Lalbagh, Palace Grounds, and Hebbal, by necessitating 100-foot deep excavation for tunnel boring machines.

"This isn't urban mobility; it's urban mutilation," Ashoka declared, emphasising that residents deserve clean air and equitable public transport. He called the project as "environmental vandalism masquerading as infrastructure," and insinuated that there is "loot at the end of this tunnel."

R Ashoka, DK Shivakumar

PHOTO: PTI

"DK Shivakumar's project is not just an environmental disaster, it's a monument to political arrogance, ego, and corruption," he stated.

The proposed project is expected to cost Rs 17,780 crore and will stretch 16.745km from Hebbal's Esteem Mall Junction to Silk Board Junction.

Ashoka also urged the State to hand over the Chinnaswammy stampede probe to the CBI, saying that the Central agency would be able to find the "real culprits". *—PTI*

Heavy rains to lash Chikkamagaluru

CHIKKAMAGALURU, 19 JULY

In light of predictions from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) indicating heavy rainfall over the next five days, the district administration of Chikkamagaluru in the State has issued a high alert, urging residents to remain indoors and advising tourists to delay their visit until 23 July. An orange alert has been declared for the duration of this period.

The district has been experiencing persistent rain for the past week, and the IMD has forecast that this wet weather will persist until 23 July. Local authorities have advised tourists to refrain from trekking in the Western Ghats during weekends and on the alerted days, as well as to avoid visiting water storage sites. All educational institutions up to Class 12 in Mangaluru, Bantwal, and Ullal taluks were closed for the day. *—Salar News*

Video screengrabs show Deputy Conservator of Forests (DCF) Praveen playing rummy during a meeting

PHOTO: SALAR

DCF plays rummy during KDP meet, gets notice

RAICHUR, 19 JULY

A video of Deputy Conservator of Forests (DCF) Praveen playing rummy on his phone during a District Planning Committee (KDP) meeting in Raichur has gone viral, prompting disciplinary action.

The incident occurred on Friday at the District Panchayat office hall in Raichur. The video, discretely recorded by a member, showed several attendees idly browsing their phones, even though several district MLAs were urging the district-in-charge minister to take note and uphold the meeting's dignity.

Minister for Forest, Zoology, and Environment, Eshwar Khandre has directed that a showcause notice against the officer, while district in-charge Minister Sharanprakash Patil instructed the Deputy Commissioner to write to the Forest Department Principal Secretary for action against the DCF. *—Salar News*

HMT row: After officer's apology, Khandre reinstates him

BIDAR, 19 JULY

The IFS officer who was suspended for writing a letter to the Central Bureau of Investigations (CBI), falsely accusing the State government regarding the denotification of forest land under HMT's possession, has admitted to his fault, following which, Forest, Ecology, and Environment Minister Eshwar B Khandre said that a recommendation has been made to reinstate him to the post of Chief Conservator of Forests.

Khandre added that information about the suspension was not sent to the central government within 15 days of the action.

Gokul had allegedly misled the Supreme Court by submitting false information and affidavits claiming the land had lost its forest nature.

The Chief Secretary has recommended revoking his suspension.

The HMT land was allegedly illegally sold to real estate companies. *—Salar News*

HC allows media to cover Microsoft-Lathika case

BENGALURU, 19 JULY

The Karnataka High Court has clarified that trial court orders in the legal battle between former Microsoft India executive Lathika Pai and the tech giant can be published by third parties, dismissing concerns over a possible blanket publication ban.

Justice M Nagaprasanna, in an order dated 14 July, observed that while the trial court's language might initially seem to bar publication, a closer examination reveals that the restriction is applicable only to Pai herself.

"The phrase 'nor publish the order of the Court' must be interpreted in the context of the plaintiff. It indicates that the plaintiff is restrained from publishing the order, not that the order is barred from being published altogether," the High Court explained.

Pai had approached the trial court in Bengaluru alleging that she was compelled to resign from Microsoft following an extended, unresolved internal investigation related to a project she oversaw. She claimed the four-year probe--left inconclusive--damaged her professional reputation. Microsoft has categorically denied the allegations.

Initially, Pai filed her civil suit in the Delhi High Court, but later withdrew it after Microsoft contested the court's territorial jurisdiction. She then refiled in State. *—PTI*

HIDDEN IN COMIC BOOKS

DRI seizes ₹40 cr worth of cocaine from flyer at KIA

BENGALURU, 19 JULY

Acting on specific intelligence, officers of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) Bengaluru Zonal Unit intercepted an Indian male passenger with over 4kg of cocaine worth Rs 40 crore.

The accused, who arrived from Doha, was intercepted at Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) in the early hours of Friday, according to a release from Ministry of Finance.

Upon careful examination of his baggage, officials observed that the passenger was carrying two superhero comics/ magazines, which were unusually heavy. The officers carefully recovered white powder concealed in the covers of the magazines, the release stated.

DRI officers have seized over 4 kg cocaine worth Rs 40 crore at the Bengaluru international airport and arrested one passenger

PHOTO: X @CBIC_INDIA

The powder tested positive for cocaine. The recovered cocaine weighing 4,006 grams (over 4kg) and having an international market value of around Rs 40 crore was seized under the provisions of the NDPS Act.

The passenger was subsequently arrested under the provisions of the NDPS Act, 1985 and was remanded to judicial custody on Friday.

The incident comes shortly after the sentencing of Kannada actress Ranya Rao, who was caught at the KIA smuggling around 14.2kgs of foreign-origin gold bars, valued at Rs 12.56 crore.

Following the interception, DRI officers conducted a search at her residential premises located at Lavelle Road, City where she resides with her husband.

The search resulted in the seizure of gold jewelry worth Rs 2.06 crore and Indian currency amounting to Rs 2.67 crore. *—ANI*

PHOTO: ANI

Majithia's judicial custody extended till 2 August

CHANDIGARH, 19 JULY

A court in Punjab's Mohali district on Saturday extended the judicial custody of Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Bikram Singh Majithia, who was arrested in a disproportionate assets case, till 2 August. He was produced before the court in Mohali amid tight security arrangements. The SAD leader was brought from New Nabha Jail in Patiala for his appearance in the Mohali court and there was heavy police deployment outside the district court complex ahead of the hearing. The Punjab Vigilance Bureau had earlier on June 25 arrested Majithia in the disproportionate assets case allegedly involving laundering of Rs 540 crore of "drug money". —*PTI*

J&K Cong's protest for statehood foiled by cops

SRINAGAR, 19 JULY

Jammu and Kashmir Congress leaders faced police obstruction while attempting to stage a protest march on Saturday, demanding the restoration of statehood to the region. Led by JKPCC president Tariq Hameed Karra, party members gathered at their office with intentions to submit a memorandum to the divisional commissioner. However, police sealed off the main entrance, preventing access. Karra condemned the police action as an undemocratic move, stating that several leaders were barred from reaching the venue. He emphasised party's commitment to their demands & labelled police's heavy-handed approach "shameful attack" on democracy. AICC Secretary Shahnawaz Chaudhary echoed these sentiments, denouncing the interference as infringement on democratic rights of elected representatives. —*PTI*

Not wrong to compromise with Guv: Sivankutty

T'PURAM, 19 JULY

Kerala General Education Minister V Sivankutty on Saturday said government "sees nothing wrong in reaching a compromise" with the Governor if it helps ensure that students' education remains unaffected. Sivankutty was responding to reporters' questions on whether government had resolved its disputes with Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar regarding functioning of universities in State. He claimed that while govt "wants all universities in State to function properly," same cannot be said of Gur or some VC, who intend to "disrupt state's higher education sector". To make sure that students' education isn't compromised, State is ready to a compromise with them, he said.—*PTI*

'Kashmiris should move on, find their place in India'

SRINAGAR, 19 JULY

Former separatist leader Bilal Gani Lone has declared the Hurriyat Conference "non-functional" and largely responsible for its own irrelevance in J&K. Lone's comments signal a significant shift in perspective, acknowledging that both the separatist group and Pakistan have failed to advance the region's progress. Emphasising need for a new political approach, Lone urged younger generation to recognise India as a "too big a power" to confront and to seek opportunities within it, stating that the "politics of exploitation has to stop." He expressed regret over the Hurriyat's missed opportunities. Lone is now focused on a mainstream political journey, seeking to "pay back" his community by addressing issues beyond basic amenities, like education & health for future generations.—*PTI*

Cong tears into PM over Trump's claims

Congress says 'Trump's missile' fired for 24th time, PM must make statement in Parl

NEW DELHI, 19 JULY

With US President Donald Trump once again repeating his claims about the India-Pakistan conflict, the Congress on Saturday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi should now himself make a clear and categorical statement in the Parliament on the American leader's claims over the last 70 days.

The opposition party's assertion came after Trump said "five jets were shot down" during the conflict between India and Pakistan in May and repeated his assertion that the fighting ended following his intervention.

"We stopped a lot of wars. And these were serious, India and Pakistan, that was going on. Planes were being shot down in the air. I think five jets were shot down, actually.

But India and Pakistan were going at it...We're not making a trade deal if you're going to be throwing around weapons, and maybe nuclear weapons, " the US President reportedly said.

Congress has been demanding that Modi must answer Trump's 'ceasefire' claims in Parliament — PHOTO: PTI

'TRUMP MISSILE'

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said just two days before the Monsoon Session of Parliament begins, "the Trump missile gets fired" for the 24th time with the same two messages.

"The PM has to make a clear and categorical statement in Parliament on what President Trump has been claiming over the past 70 days," the Congress leader said.

The Congress has been demanding that Modi must answer President Trump's India-Pakistan "ceasefire" claims in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha during the forthcoming Monsoon session of the Parliament. —*Agencies*

- The opposition party's assertion came after Trump said "five jets were shot down" during the conflict between India and Pakistan in May and repeated his assertion that the fighting ended following his intervention.

India-US bilateral trade deal talks conclude

NEW DELHI, 19 JULY

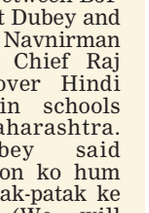
India and the US concluded the fifth round of talks for a proposed Bilateral Trade Agreement in Washington on 17 July, an official confirmed.

The negotiations, held over four days, were led by India's chief negotiator and Special Secretary in the Department of Commerce, Rajesh Agrawal.

Both sides are aiming to finalise an interim deal before 1 August, when the suspension period for former President Trump's tariffs ends. These tariffs, announced on 2 April, were initially suspended for 90 days and later extended to allow ongoing trade talks.

India is seeking the removal of additional tariffs and duty relief on steel, aluminium, autos, and labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, leather, and jewellery. US is pushing for access to India's markets for industrial goods, electric vehicles, wines, and genetically modified crops. —*PTI*

"If India gets a good trade deal, we will go ahead with it. If it doesn't happen, we will not do it. India always puts the country's interest first



-Piyush Goyal, Union Minister

MIGRANT ROW

'BJP in Assam threatening Bengali-speaking people'

KOLKATA, 19 JULY

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has condemned the BJP government in Assam for allegedly threatening Bengali-speaking citizens who seek to "peacefully coexist" while respecting diverse languages and religions. Banerjee labelled the BJP's "divisive agenda" in Assam as having "crossed all limits."

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader accused the central government and BJP-ruled states of systematically targeting Bengali-speaking migrants, branding them as "illegal Bangladeshi" or "Rohingya". She highlighted that Bangla is the second most spoken language in Assam and asserted that persecuting citizens for their linguistic identity is both discriminatory and unconstitutional.

"This divisive agenda of the BJP has crossed all limits, and the people of Assam will fight back," she stated in a post on X. Banerjee expressed her solidarity with those advocating for their language, identity, and democratic rights.

In a rebuttal, Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma questioned Banerjee's motives, suggesting she only cared for Bengali-speaking Muslims. He warned that if she visited Assam for their sake, she would face opposition from Assamese and Hindu-Bengali communities. —*Agencies*

SIT in Tripura to find illegal immigrants

AGARTALA, 19 JULY

West Tripura district police have formed a 15-member Special Task Force to identify and deport illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar. —*PTI*

Congress to protest after Baghel's son's arrest

RAIPUR, 19 JULY

The Chhattisgarh Congress has announced plans for an economic blockade across the state on 22 July, in response to the recent arrest of Chaitanya Baghel, son of former Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with an alleged liquor scam.

The blockade aims to protest against the supposed misuse of Central agencies against opposition leaders and to safeguard the state's natural resources, according to state Congress chief Deepak Baij.

Leaders have accused the BJP government of intimidating Congress members, with former CM Bhupesh Baghel asserting that the arrest is part of a coordinated effort to target and suppress opposition voices, particularly those opposing corporate interests such as the Adani Group.

Bhupesh Baghel claimed that Chaitanya Baghel had been unfairly arrested without prior notice or inquiry, violating constitutional rights.

He and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra both emphasized that the BJP's actions are attempts to silence dissent within Chhattisgarh. —*PTI*

Seat-sharing delays led to MVA's defeat in polls: Uddhav

MUMBAI, 19 JULY

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief C has questioned the rationale behind the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) alliance if mistakes like delays in finalising seat-sharing agreements and selecting candidates during the 2024 Maharashtra Assembly elections are repeated.

In an interview with Saamana, he emphasised that the euphoria following the MVA's impressive performance in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections morphed into individual egos focused on securing party-wise victories during the Assembly elections, ultimately leading to their defeat.

He pointed out that his party had to give up constituencies it had consistently won during the Lok Sabha polls.

As the seat sharing discussions prolonged, candidates were not finalised in several constituencies, he recalled. "It was a mistake which has to be rectified. There is no point staying together if such mistakes are to be made in future," Thackeray said.

Thackeray is Maharashtra's identity

Talking about the battle over the party's symbol, he said,

"Thackeray is not just a brand, but an identity of Maharashtra, Marathi manoos and Hindu pride," while accusing some of trying to erase it.

The Election Commission can freeze the party's symbol but not give away the name coined by his grandfather and father, Uddhav charged. "How can you steal the love and trust people have for the family?" he said, while also taking veiled jabs at BJP and RSS.

The Shiv Sena split in June 2022 after Eknath Shinde and 39 party MLAs rebelled against its leadership, leading to the collapse of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government helmed by Uddhav Thackeray. Shinde then joined hands with the BJP to form a government and became the CM. —*Agencies*

Taught him Hindi: Dubey hits back at Raj

NEW DELHI, 19 JULY

A sharp war of words has erupted between BJP MP Nishikant Dubey and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) Chief Raj Thackeray over Hindi imposition in schools across Maharashtra. When Dubey said "Marathi logon ko hum yahan pe patak-patak ke maarenge," (We will thrash Marathi people repeatedly,) Thackeray warned Dubey latter stating "Mumbai ke samundar mein dubo-dubo ke maarenge." (We will drown you in the sea in Mumbai)." The remark prompted Dubey to mockingly ask on X, "Did I teach Thackeray Hindi?" Dubey said he was proud of Hindi and accused the MNS of a history of hostility towards non-Marathi speakers. — *PTI*

RJD writes to INDIA bloc over SIR in Bihar

PATNA 19 JULY

Leader of Opposition in the Bihar Assembly Tejashwi Yadav, wrote to 35 notable Opposition leaders on Saturday, seeking their support in his struggle against the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the voter list in Bihar, which he claims might lead.

In a message posted on 'X', the RJD leader said: "I have written against the attack on voting rights and democracy being carried out under the guise of voter list revision by the Election Commission at the behest of the BJP government. We will continue to oppose this process together until it becomes open and inclusive."

Citing the ECI's press note dated 16 July, he pointed out that about 4.5 per cent of the population has already been excluded on the grounds of "electors not found at their addresses," in addition to another 4 per cent marked as "probably deceased or permanently shifted."

This, he said, reportedly adds to an "unprecedented" 12-15 per cent people being disenfrachised.

Meanwhile, the ECI has said that 94.68 per cent of the existing electors have s ubmitted their enumeration forms during the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar.

ECI said, Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) will publish draft Electoral Roll on Friday, 1 August, 2025. S —Agencies

- In a message posted on 'X', the RJD leader said: "I have written against the attack on voting rights and democracy being carried out under the guise of voter list revision by the Election Commission at the behest of the BJP government. We will continue to oppose this process together until it becomes open and inclusive."

Quitting politics, says Punjab AAP MLA; resigns

CHANDIGARH, 18 JULY

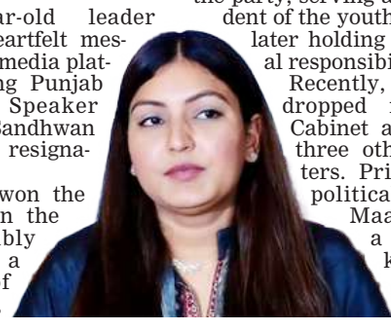
Anmol Gagan Maan, a member of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and MLA for Kharar, announced her resignation from the Punjab Assembly and her decision to exit politics entirely.

The 35-year-old leader shared her heartfelt message on social media platform X, urging Punjab Assembly Speaker Kultar Singh Sandhwan to accept her resignation.

Maan, who won the Kharar seat in the 2022 assembly elections by a margin of 37,885 votes, did not disclose a reason for her departure. She expressed her best wishes for her party and hopes for the Punjab government to meet the expectations of its citizens.

Having joined AAP in July 2020, Maan grew active within the party, serving as co-president of the youth wing and later holding ministerial responsibilities.

Recently, she was dropped from the Cabinet along with three other ministers. Prior to her political career, Maan was a well-known singer. —*PTI*



DIFFERENCE IN FAITH?

TTD suspends 4 in Andhra over non-Hindu allegations

TIRUPATI, 19 JULY

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), the official custodian of Sri Venkateswara temple here, suspended four employees on Saturday based on allegations that they are non-Hindus and practising other religions.

The temple body suspended Deputy Executive Engineer (quality control) B Elizar, staff nurse of BIRRD Hospital, S Rosi, grade-1 pharmacist of BIRRD Hospital, M Premavati and G Asuntha from SV Ayurveda Pharmacy.

"TTD has suspended four of its employees on the grounds of allegations that they practise other faiths," said an official press release on Saturday.

These employees are believed to have violated the institution's code of conduct and acted irresponsibly in their duties while representing and working for a Hindu religious organisation, it said.

After examining the report submitted by the TTD Vigilance Department and other evidence, departmental action was taken against them as per the rules, and the four employees were immediately suspended, the release added. — *PTI*

These employees are believed to have violated the institution's code of conduct — PHOTO: ANI

Baba faked RSS role, misused PM's photo

NEW DELHI, 19 JULY

Chhangur Baba, also known as Jamaluddin, has been arrested for allegedly masterminding a large-scale religious conversion racket in Uttar Pradesh.

Investigators revealed that he posed as a senior member of an organisation claiming to be affiliated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), even using a letterhead bearing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's photograph to mislead officials.

He was appointed general secretary (Awadh) of the Bharat Pratikarth Seva Sangh, a front created by co-accused Eidul Islam. To appear credible, Islam established a fake centre in Nagpur the RSS's headquarters and frequently name-dropped prominent RSS leaders during official meetings.

Chhangur Baba is accused of targeting minor girls from impoverished backgrounds for conversion. The Special Task Force has also uncovered illegal land deals involving local officials.

According to the Uttar Pradesh Anti-Terrorist Squad, he was plotting to establish a terrorist training facility with foreign funding. Authorities believe he received over Rs 500 crore from abroad, including the Gulf and possibly Pakistan.

The Enforcement Directorate has linked him to properties worth over Rs 100 crore, suspicious transactions involving Rs 60 crore, and ties to a Panama-based firm named Logos Marine. —*Agencies*

Cong MLA upset over Revanth's '10-year CM' remark

HYDERABAD, 19 JULY

Komatireddy Raj Gopal Reddy, ruling Congress MLA from Munugode in Nalgonda district, has voiced concerns regarding Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy's declaration that he intends to remain in office for a decade. Raj Gopal Reddy contended that such public pronouncements contradict the foundational principles of the Congress party.

"In Congress, a national party, the Chief Minister is elected through a democratic process and as per directives from the high command. Genuine Congress leaders and activists will not accept any actions aimed at transforming Telangana Congress into a personal fiefdom," he remarked in a post on X. This is the first instance of dissent within the Congress ranks since the party assumed power in 2023.

The controversy arose after CM Revanth Reddy expressed his confidence that he would be the CM from December 2023 to 2034. —*PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Lakshadweep may buy Bitra for defence purposes

KOCHI, 19 JULY

The Lakshadweep administration has proposed acquiring Bitra, the smallest inhabited island in the archipelago, for defence purposes. A government notification stated the island would be transferred to central defence agencies, citing its strategic importance and logistical challenges posed by civilian habitation. The acquisition will follow the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition Act, 2013, with a social impact assessment to be completed within two months. MP Hamdullah Sayeed strongly opposed the move, accusing the administration of attempting to displace the indigenous population without proper consultation. He vowed to explore legal and political options and to raise the matter in Parliament, demanding the proposal's immediate withdrawal. *—PTI*

Defence guard shoots dead woman in J&K

JAMMU, 19 JULY

A 35-year-old woman was killed after being hit by a bullet from the weapon of a village defence guard in a remote village in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district. Pushpa Devi, the wife of Rakesh Kumar, had ventured out of her house in Aragam village in Chatroo area when she was suddenly hit by the bullet on 18 July. The woman reportedly died on the spot. A case has been registered and the accused Sandeep Kumar has been taken into custody, police officials said. Further investigation is underway to ascertain the cause of firing - whether the bullet was fired deliberately or accidentally, the officials said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

6 killed as mini-van crashes into truck in UP

MATHURA, 19 JULY

Six people died and two were injured when a mini-van collided with a truck on the Yamuna Expressway here on Saturday. The accident took place at milestone 140 at around 3am. The Agra-bound mini-van rammed into a heavy vehicle after the driver had fallen asleep at the wheel. The family members of the deceased were informed and further investigation was underway. In a separate accident, a bus on its way from Delhi to Madhya Pradesh overturned near milestone 131 at around 4am. Eight injured people were admitted to the District Hospital in Mathura, while nine others were taken to the SN Medical College in Agra. The injured were in a stable condition. *—PTI*

Speeding car kills women sleeping under UP flyover

PRAYAGRAJ, 19 JULY

An elderly woman died and two others were injured after being run over by a speeding car in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh. The women had been sleeping under a flyover near Ambedkar Crossing on 18 July when the vehicle struck them. All three were taken to SRN Hospital, where 65-year-old Chamoli Devi succumbed to her injuries during treatment. The driver fled the scene, abandoning the vehicle, which has since been impounded. A case has been registered at the Civil Lines Police Station, and two police teams have been formed to apprehend the accused. The deceased's body has been sent for a post-mortem examination, the officer confirmed. *—PTI*

Miscreants set Odisha teen on fire

Govt funds treatment of girl with 70% burns

BHUBANESWAR, 19 JULY

A 15-year-old girl was set on fire by unidentified persons in Odisha's Puri district on Saturday.

The girl was rushed to AIIMS Bhubaneswar in a critical condition. Though she suffered 70 per cent burn injuries on her back, abdomen and other parts, she is able to speak.

Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida, also in charge of the Women and Child Development Department, said the government will bear the expenses of the girl's treatment. The police were asked to arrest the culprits as soon as possible.

The incident took place at Bayabar village in around 9am when the girl, a class 8 dropout, was going to her friend's house.

Three unidentified motorcycle-borne youths intercepted her, forcibly took her to the banks of Bhargavi river, sprinkled an inflammable substance on her body and set her on fire.

The miscreants fled the spot. Local people doused the fire and took her to Pipili government hospital. She was later shifted to AIIMS Bhubaneswar.

The girl was on her way to her friend's house, when three youths incerpeted her and set her on fire in Odisha's Puri on Saturday *PHOTO: ANI*

The police started an investigation and were questioning some people. Police teams were formed and a manhunt was launched to nab the culprits. They also searched for clues from CCTV cameras installed in private homes nearby.

Deputy CM Parida, in an X post, stated: "I am saddened and shocked to hear the news that some miscreants at Balanga in Puri district poured petrol on a fifteen-year-old girl and set her on fire."

Meanwhile, a delegation of Opposition BJD and Congress visited AIIMS Bhubaneswar and met the family members of the girl, and doctors.

"She is currently under treatment... we pray for her speedy recovery," senior Congress leader and former Union minister Srikant Jena said. *—PTI*

Harassed by profs, girl dies by suicide

Student accused 2 teachers in suicide note

NOIDA, 19 JULY

A second-year bachelor of Dental Surgery student of the Sharda University in Uttar Pradesh's Greater Noida hanged herself in her hostel room after allegedly being mentally harassed by two faculty members.

The incident took place on 18 July and a case has been filed at the Knowledge Park Police Station in Gautam Budh Nagar.

Police have arrested faculty members, Mahinder and Shairy in connection with her death after protests broke out in the university campus.

The victim, Jyoti Sharma hailed from Gurugram in Haryana. Her family had filed a complaint against the duo.

Jyoti had named the faculty members in the suicide note, which was recovered from her hostel room. She had blamed them for mentally harassing and humiliating her, forcing her to take the extreme step.

Her family rushed to the university campus soon after being informed of her death.

Her body was sent for autopsy. Investigations are underway and a forensic team also inspected her hostel room to collect potential evidence.

Students of the Sharda University protest against the suicide by a student at the university campus on Saturday *PHOTO: ANI*

- Police have arrested faculty members, Mahinder and Shairy in connection with her death after protests broke out in the university campus in Noida.

The director of public relations of the university said that a high-level committee has been instituted to examine the instances leading to the incident. It will also recommend institutional measures for the safety and well-being of the students. "We are cooperating with the statutory authorities conducting the investigations," the director said. The faculty members were suspended.

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 25497777 for support. *—PTI*

FOR ILLEGAL BETTING

ED summons Meta, Google officials

NEW DELHI, 19 JULY

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has summoned representatives of tech giants Meta and Google as part of a money laundering investigation against a number of illegal online betting platforms.

The executives were asked to depose before the agency on 21 July here and get their statements recorded under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

There was no immediate response from the two companies.

The federal agency is probing multiple platforms hosting illegal betting and gambling links, including instances of advertisements placed for them on various Internet-based social media outlets and app stores.

- The Google and Meta executives were asked to depose before the agency on 21 July in New Delhi and get their statements recorded under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

The tech giants are understood to have been called by the ED to understand how such illegal platforms are able to place advertisements on their social media and communication links.

The move comes after ED raided four locations in Mumbai in a major dabba trading and online betting case and seized unaccounted cash of Rs 3.3 crore, along with luxury items and cash-counting machines.

Some actors, celebrities and sports persons are also under the scanner of the agency in these cases, and they are also expected to be summoned by the ED soon.

Illegal online betting and gambling platforms were cheating people of their money and evading taxes worth crores of rupees. *—PTI*

Gujarat cop's son mows down 2 while racing with friends

BENGALURU, 19 JULY

Two pedestrians tragically lost their lives and at least two others sustained injuries after a speeding car, driven by the son of a local police officer, collided with them in Bhavnagar, Gujarat. The incident occurred earlier this week in the Kaliyabeed area around 4pm. Harshraj Singh Gohil, 20, was reportedly racing with a friend at speeds between 120 to 150km per hour when he lost control of his white Creta SUV, striking 30-year-old Bhargav Bhatt and 65-year-old Champaben Vachani, both of whom died at the scene. The vehicle then skidded into a scooter, causing further injuries.

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

- CCTV footage captured the incident, showcasing the reckless speed at which Gohil was driving. Bhatt, a newlywed was on his way to work when he was hit by the speeding SUV.

CCTV footage captured the incident, showcasing the reckless speed at which Gohil was driving. Bhatt, a newlywed who had recently started working at Madhu Silica, was on his way to work when the tragedy struck.

The accused was taken into custody, with his father, assistant sub-inspector Aniruddha Singh Vajubha Gohil, reprimanding him. *—Agencies*

18 die in UP rains; floods in Kerala

LUCKNOW, 19 JULY

Severe rains affected several Indian states, claiming 18 lives in Uttar Pradesh within 24 hours on 18 July. Most deaths were due to drowning and snakebites, with Chitrakoot reporting six fatalities and Mahoba, Banda and Moradabad three each.

Heavy downpours caused flooding and traffic disruption across Kerala's northern districts. Kozhikode alone recorded crop damage worth Rs 44 crore. Authorities remain on alert in high-risk areas.

Heavy rains lashed West Bengal, particularly the north. This may intensify rainfall in south Bengal districts. Kolkata received rains. *—PTI*

Bihar hospital murder: 5 held, prime suspects flee

KOLKATA, 19 JULY

Five people have been arrested from New Town near Kolkata in connection with the murder of gangster Chandan Mishra in a Patna hospital.

However, the prime suspects, who were allegedly hiding in the city managed to flee, prompting police to launch a renewed search operation.

The five arrested, who were apprehended from a housing complex in the satellite township of the metropolis following raids by the Bihar Police and the West Bengal Special Task Force on Saturday, were "providing logistics" to the five main accused who killed Mishra.

According to CCTV camera footage, the prime suspects escaped the city in a white vehicle, which was spotted passing through Basanti Highway near here.

Police are questioning the five accused. Their mobile phones and other documents were seized. Mishra, hailing from Bihar's Buxar, was shot dead by gunmen inside a private hospital in Patna. *—PTI*

Five men gunned down a murder convict in parole inside the ICU of Patna hospital in Bihar on 17 July *PHOTO: X*

'Can't bin minor's assault charge citing report'

NEW DELHI, 19 JULY

The Delhi High Court has said that merely because the medical report of a minor girl does not reflect injuries, her "explicit statement" about assault on her cannot be discarded.

Justice Girish Kathpalia made the observations while directing a trial court to consider afresh the charge of assault and wrongful confinement against a man and his wife in a 2016 case lodged by alleged victim working as a receptionist in the accused's company.

PHOTO: ANI

- The trial court had framed charge of rape and unnatural sex against the man, while discharging him and his wife of the charges of assault and wrongful confinement. It held that since the medico-legal certificate did not mention injury, charges can't be framed.

The trial court had framed charge of rape and unnatural sex against the man, while discharging him and his wife of the charges of assault and wrongful confinement.

The trial court had held that since the girl's medico-legal certificate did not mention any injury, charge for offence cannot be framed.

It also held that since there was no averment in the FIR that the respondents tied up girl's hands, there was no confinement.

The high court, however, set aside the findings, saying that whether or not the physical assaults would lead to noticeable injuries, not found in the MLC, would be explainable in many ways, which can be done only during trial. For illegal confinement, a person need not be tied and can be confined within a room. *—PTI*

Bank manager dies by suicide over 'work pressure'

BENGALURU, 19 JULY

A chief manager at a nationalised bank tragically died by suicide at his workplace in Baramati, Pune district, late Thursday night, according to police reports. A suicide note found at the scene indicated that work-related stress contributed to his decision.

The manager, believed to be in his late 40s, had been serving his notice period after resigning on 11 July due to health concerns and excessive workload.

Following the bank's closing hours, he instructed staff to leave, promising to secure the premises himself. After he failed to return home at his usual time, his wife went to the bank, where she alerted the staff, who found him hanging from the ceiling.

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 25497777 for support. *—Agencies*

Delhi woman, her lover drug husband to death

NEW DELHI, 19 JULY

The death of 36-year-old Karan Dev, initially thought to be due to accidental electrocution, has escalated into a disturbing murder investigation steeped in betrayal.

Karan was rushed to Mata Rooprani Maggo Hospital on 13 July by his wife, Sushmita, who alleged he had suffered an electric shock.

Despite the family's insistence against a post-mortem, Delhi Police intervened due to the suspicious circumstances surrounding his death. Three days later, Karan's younger brother, Kunal, reported concerns that his brother had been murdered by Sushmita and their cousin, Rahul. He presented evidence of an Instagram conversation revealing their plot to kill Karan due to an affair between Sushmita and Rahul. They administered 15 sleeping pills to Karan before giving him an electric shock. *—Agencies*

PHOTO: X

- Karan was rushed to Mata Rooprani Maggo Hospital on 13 July by his wife, Sushmita, who alleged that he suffered an electric shock.

INDORE HORROR

2 teens force boy for oral sex in school

INDORE, 19 JULY

A 13-year-old boy was allegedly sodomised by two teenagers, who forced him into oral sex on the campus of a school in Madhya Pradesh's Indore.

The victim's family allegedly had to run from pillar to post to get a mandatory medical test done, prompting the authorities to launch a probe into the delay.

The accused boys, aged 16 and 17 years, were detained and sent to a correctional facility.

Police officials said the incident occurred on 17 July when the victim was playing on an open ground in the school's campus. The accused sodomised him and forced him to perform oral sex.

The official were not students and one of them was a mechanic. Children living in the vicinity often played on the open campus.

The boy was allegedly sodomised while he had been playing in the ground of his school *PHOTO: ANI*

A case has been registered under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

The boy was asked to undergo a swab test at the district hospital, where his family was told, after waiting for a long time, that it lacked the facility.

The family met the chief medical and health officer for the test, but to no avail. The child was then taken to the government-run MY Hospital, where he underwent the test.

Policemen also accompanied the victim for the test.

Ashok Yadav, superintendent of MY Hospital ordered an inquiry into the delay.

"I have sought explanations from the Chief Medical & Health Officer (CMHO) and duty doctors of the district hospital regarding the delay," he added. The swab test facility was available at small health centres. *—PTI*

FLAMINGOS FLOCK TO TN

Greater flamingos and painted storks have returned to Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu, this monsoon, drawn by abundant food and ideal breeding conditions. The White Lotus Pond in Srivaikuntam Kasba, now brimming with water and aquatic life due to good rains, has become a hotspot for migratory birds. Thoothukudi's salt pans and brackish water bodies continue to serve as vital feeding and nesting grounds for these visitors from Africa, Asia, and Europe
PHOTO: ANI

Trump's tariffs threat on Brazil backfires for Bolsonaro

US President Donald Trump may have thought that pressuring Brazil with higher tariffs would help his ally, the country's former President Jair Bolsonaro, but the move apparently backfired.

Last week, Trump sent a letter to Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva threatening a 50 per cent import tax and directly linking the decision to Bolsonaro's trial, which he called a "witch hunt".

"This trial should end immediately!" Trump wrote Thursday evening in a second letter, this one addressed to Bolsonaro. He added that he had "strongly voiced" his disapproval through his tariff policy.

Rather than backing down, Brazil's Supreme Court escalated the case, worsening Bolsonaro's legal troubles. On Friday morning, federal police raided Bolsonaro's home and political office. The former president was ordered to wear an ankle monitor, banned from using social media, and hit with other restrictions.

Meanwhile, President Lula — who was facing higher unpopularity, growing opposition in Congress and increasing risks to his likely reelection bid — seems to have gained politically from the situation.

Now the 79-year-old leftist Lula, in office for the third non-consecutive term of his long political career, is seeing renewed acceptance, congressional support against Trump and pleas to run one last time to defend Brazil's sovereignty.

US President Donald Trump
PHOTO: PTI

Back in the game

Lula has appeared more energized in public since Trump's announcement. At a national students assembly Thursday, he wore a blue cap reading "Sovereign Brazil Unites Us" — a contrast to MAGA's red cap.

"A gringo will not give orders to this president," he told the crowd, and called the tariff hike "unacceptable blackmail."

The impact on Lula is not a first. Trump's actions targeting other countries have boosted ideological rivals in Canada and Australia instead of strengthening his allies at a local level.

Private pollster Atlas said Tuesday that Lula's unpopularity had reversed course after his spat with Trump. Lula's job approval went from at 47.3 per cent in June to 49.7 per cent since the tariffs battle began.

The poll of more than 2,800 people was conducted 11-13 July, with a margin of error of 2 percentage points. The study also said 62.2 per cent of Brazilians think the higher tariffs are unjustified while 36.8 per cent agree with the measure.

Even Bolsonaro's former vice president, Sen Hamilton Mourao, criticised Trump's move as undue interference in Brazil's politics, though he said he agreed the trial against the far-right leader is biased against him.

Social media analytics firm Palver analyzed 20,000 messages about Trump on WhatsApp, Brazil's most widely used communication platform, a day after Trump's announcement. Its analysis said right-wing users dominated viral content, but spontaneous conversations leaned left, mocking Bolsonaro as submissive and defending Brazil's sovereignty.

"Trump has put Lula back in the game," said Thomas Traumann, an independent political consultant and former spokesman for the Brazilian presidency who only weeks ago argued that Lula had lost his front-runner status in the presidential race as he struggled to deliver on his promises on the economy.

Business leaders who until recently sided with Bolsonaro are having to court Lula to negotiate with Trump.

National outrage

"In general, with the major exception of a more radical conservative wing, generated national outrage for violating Brazil's sovereignty," lawmaker Arnaldo Jardim, a member of the congressional agricultural caucus, told The Associated Press.

Jardim, who pushed for the approval of a reciprocity bill that could be used by Lula if there's no agreement until the 1 August, deadline, hardly sides with the President.

Top congressional leaders who recently helped nix a Lula decree to raise a transactions tax were moving toward a head-on collision with him. After Trump's announcement, they signed a joint statement agreeing with Lula's promise to use the reciprocity law against the US.

In another change, Brazil's Congress decided to start moving on Lula's plan to give an income tax break to millions of poorer Brazilians. Many politicians said that such initiative was dead after Lula became the first president in three decades to have a decree annulled by lawmakers.

Bolsonaro remains on trial

At the Supreme Court, Bolsonaro is only getting deeper into trouble as his trial continues.

Earlier this week, Brazil's chief prosecutor called for a guilty verdict, accusing the former president of leading an armed criminal organization, attempting to stage a coup and attempting violent abolition of the democratic rule of law, among other charges.

The defence will next likely present its case in the coming weeks, after which the panel of Supreme Court justices in the trial will vote on whether to convict or acquit him.

The former president also suffered more consequences — the court's latest restrictions on Bolsonaro, including the ankle monitor, are part of a second investigation against one of his sons, Eduardo Bolsonaro, a Brazilian lawmaker who currently lives in the United States and is known for his close ties to Trump.

He has been under scrutiny for allegedly working with US authorities to impose sanctions against Brazilian officials.

Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, who oversees criminal cases against Bolsonaro, said his and his son's actions attempted to pressure the Brazilian judiciary by involving the US. *—PTI*

LETTERS

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SALAR ساڈ

HOW SAFE IS YOUR DAILY SUNSCREEN?

Last week, the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) released its safety review of seven active ingredients commonly used in sunscreens.

It found five were low-risk and appropriate for use in sunscreens at their current concentrations. However, the TGA recommended tighter restrictions on two ingredients – homosalate and oxybenzone – to reduce how much can be used in a product. This is based on uncertainty about their potential effects on endocrine system, which creates & releases hormones.

This news, together with recent reports that some products may have inflated their claims of SPF coverage, might make Australians worried about whether their sunscreen products are working and safe.

But it's not time to abandon sunscreens. In Australia, all sunscreens must pass a strict approval process before going on the market. The TGA tests the safety and efficacy of all ingredients, and this recent review is part of the TGA's continuing commitment to safety.

Australia has the highest incidence of melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancer worldwide, and approximately 95 per cent of melanoma cases in Australia are linked to ultraviolet (UV) exposure.

Still, it's understandable that people want to know what's in their products and any changes that might affect them. So let's take a closer look at the safety review and what it found.

The TGA periodically reexamines the safety of all therapeutic goods
PHOTO: FREEPIK

What are the active ingredients in sunscreen?

There are two main types of sunscreen: physical and chemical. This is based on the different active ingredients they use.

An active ingredient is a chemical component in a product that has an effect on the body – basically, what makes the product "work".

In sunscreens, this is the compound that absorbs UV rays from the Sun. The other ingredients – for example, those that give the sunscreen its smell or help the skin absorb it – are "inactive". Physical sunscreens typically use minerals, such as titanium dioxide and zinc oxide, that can absorb the Sun's rays but also reflect some of them.

Chemical sunscreens use a variety of chemical ingredients to absorb or scatter UV light, both long-wave (UVA) and short-wave (UVB).

Why did the TGA do the review?

Our current limits for the concentrations of these chemicals in sunscreen are generally consistent with other regulatory agencies, such as the European Union and the US Food and Drug Administration. However, safety is an evolving subject. The TGA periodically reexamines the safety of all therapeutic goods.

Last year, the TGA revised its method of estimating sunscreen exposure to more closely model how skin is exposed to sunscreens over time.

This model considers how much sunscreen someone typically applies, how much skin they cover and how it's absorbed through the skin.

Given this new model, along with changes in the EU and US approaches to sunscreen regulation, the TGA selected seven common sunscreen ingredients to investigate in depth.

Determining what's safe

When evaluating whether chemicals are safe for human use, testing will often consider studies in animals, especially when there is no or limited data on humans. These animal tests are done by the manufacturers, not the TGA.

To take into account any unforeseen sensitivity humans may have to these chemicals, a "margin of safety" is built in. This is typically a concentration 50–100 times lower than the dose at which no negative effect was seen in animals.

The sunscreen review used a margin of safety 100 times lower than this dose as the safety threshold.

For most of the seven investigated sunscreen chemicals, the TGA found the margin of safety was above 100. This means they're considered safe and low-risk for long-term use.

However, two ingredients, homosalate and oxybenzone, were found to be below 100. This was based on the highest estimated sunscreen exposure, applied to the body at the maximum permitted concentration: 15 per cent for homosalate, 10 per cent for oxybenzone.

What are the health concerns?

Homosalate and oxybenzone have low acute oral toxicity – meaning you would need to swallow a lot of it to experience toxic effects, nearly half a kilogramme of these chemicals – and don't cause irritation to eyes or skin.

There is inconclusive evidence that oxybenzone potentially causes cancer in rats and mice, but only at concentrations to which humans will never be exposed via sunscreens.

The key issue is whether the two ingredients affect the endocrine system.

While effects have been seen at high concentrations in animal studies, it is not clear whether these translate to humans exposed to sunscreen levels.

No effect has been seen in clinical studies on fertility, hormones, weight gain and, in pregnant women, fetal development.

What are the recommendations?

The TGA recommends that the allowed concentration of homosalate and oxybenzone be reduced.

But exactly how much it will be lowered is complicated, depending on whether the product is intended for adults or children, specifically for the face, or the whole body, and so on.

However, some sunscreens would need to be reformulated or warning labels placed on particular formulations.

What about benzophenone?

There is also some evidence that benzophenone – a chemical produced when sunscreen that contains octocrylene degrades – may cause cancer at high concentrations. This is based on studies in which mice and rats were fed benzophenone well above the concentration in sunscreens.

The bottom line

The proposed restrictions are very conservative, based on worst-case scenarios. But even in worst-case scenarios, the margin of safety for these ingredients is still below the level at which any negative effect was seen in animals. *—PTI*

Jharkhand is rapidly turning into pearl farming hub

Jharkhand is rapidly emerging as India's freshwater pearl farming hub, with the state government and Centre implementing comprehensive training programmes and infrastructure development to transform this niche sector into a major livelihood opportunity for rural youth and farmers.

The transformation gained momentum when the Centre notified development of Hazaribagh as the first pearl farming cluster with Rs 22 crore investment under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) in collaboration with the Jharkhand government.

What started as a pilot project in 2019-20 under the state plan has now evolved into a structured ecosystem focusing on skill development, with specialised training centres established across the state to teach farmers the intricate art of pearl cultivation.

Training revolution takes root

The Purty Agrotech Training Centre, established in Ranchi in 2024 using corporate CSR funds, has emerged as the nerve centre of this training revolution. The facility has already trained over 132 farmers from across the state in advanced pearl culture techniques, with these trained farmers now cascading their knowledge to others in their respective districts, creating a multiplier effect.

"Training is the backbone of successful pearl farming. We are focusing on round pearl culture as it fetches more returns compared to designer pearls," said Budhan Singh Purty, a mechanical engineer from NIT Jamshedpur who runs the training centre and has become one of the state's few surgical experts in round pearl cultivation.

The training programmes emphasise skilled surgical grafting techniques, use of specialised instruments, and careful post-surgical management -- critical factors that determine survival rates and quality of pearl production. This focus on technical expertise is crucial since culturing round pearls demands precision to ensure high survival rates and quality production.

Recognising the sector's potential, St Xavier's College, Ranchi, has introduced certificate courses in pearl farming ranging from six months to one-and-a-half years, integrating academic research with practical field experience.

"Pearl farming is going to be a rising sector in Jharkhand and provide job opportunities to youth," Professor Ritesh Kumar Shukla told PTI.

Mussels, Bivalve Molluscs found in both freshwater and marine environments, play a central role in freshwater pearl production as living hosts that secrete nacre to form pearls over a three-year period ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

Compelling economics drive adoption

The state's emergence as a pearl farming hub is driven by compelling economics -- round pearls can be cultivated in backyard settings using cement tanks, buckets, or fish tanks, and yield profits of more than ten times the investment. The cultivation can be done in small spaces, making it accessible to small farmers and youth seeking alternative livelihoods.

The economics are straightforward: it costs Rs 35-50 to nurture one mussel for three years until it produces a pearl, which then sells for up to Rs 1,000, depending on quality. This means farmers can expect significant returns on relatively modest investments.

Success story: From engineer to pearl entrepreneur

Budhan Singh Purty's journey exemplifies the sector's potential. The 46-year-old engineer has scaled up from 5,000 mussels in 2014 to 1.7 lakh mussels currently. With an investment of Rs 6.5 lakh, he expects to earn Rs 32 lakh from his upcoming harvest.

"I started pearl farming with 5,000 mussels in a pond in naxal-affected West Singhbhum. Now more farmers are encouraged to take up pearl farming, helping them come back to the mainstream," Purty said.

Using his engineering background, Purty has developed indigenous surgical tools costing Rs 3,600 to manufacture, compared to imported alternatives that cost up to Rs 25,000.

Purty has established supply chains with TRIFED, Tata BigBasket, IndiaMART, and also supplies to Surat for export purposes, demonstrating the market potential for Jharkhand's pearl production.

Government support and future plans

State Fisheries Department Director HN Dwivedi emphasised the huge potential to promote natural pearl farming as a cottage industry in Jharkhand, providing employment to youth.

The state has also proposed setting up a brood bank of Vietnamese mussel species Hyriopsis Cumingii and sought funds from the Centre under PMMSY.

The National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) has reported that 1.02 lakh pearls were produced from Hazaribagh district alone, indicating the sector's growing scale.

Science behind pearl production

Mussels, Bivalve Molluscs found in both freshwater and marine environments, play a central role in freshwater pearl production as living hosts that secrete nacre to form pearls over a three-year period.

The process requires careful management and monitoring to ensure optimal conditions for pearl formation.

The focus on freshwater pearl cultivation in Jharkhand leverages the state's natural water resources while providing a sustainable livelihood option that can be scaled from small backyard operations to larger commercial ventures.

As this sector continues to expand, Jharkhand is positioning itself not just as a production hub but as a centre of excellence for pearl farming training and technology development, potentially transforming the economic landscape for rural communities across the state. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

NYC's Cuomo settles harassment lawsuit for $45k

NEW YORK, 19 JULY

The state of New York has agreed to pay $450,000 to settle a lawsuit brought by former aide Brittany Commisso, who accused ex-governor Andrew Cuomo of sexual harassment and groping. Commisso's lawsuit alleged harassment by Cuomo and retaliation for reporting the incidents, contributing to his resignation in 2021 following multiple allegations. Her attorneys described the settlement as a "complete vindication" of her claims. Cuomo, currently campaigning for New York City mayor as an Independent after losing the Democratic primary, continues to deny wrongdoing, with his lawyers stating that the settlement is an avoidance of the truth. Commisso initially filed her lawsuit in 2023 under the Adult Survivors Act. *—PTI*

Pakistan achieves $2.1B current account surplus

ISLAMABAD, 19 JULY

Pakistan has officially recorded a current account surplus of $2.1 billion for the fiscal year ending 30 June, marking a significant turnaround from the previous year's deficit. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif hailed this achievement as indicative of an improving economy. The surplus has been attributed to effective measures to limit luxury imports and boost remittances, which surged by 27 per cent to $38 billion, along with a notable rise in exports, particularly in textiles and IT. Although this marks a positive shift, the country remains under an IMF programme, necessitating continued financial reforms. Sharif expressed optimism about the economy's recovery, attributing improvements to increased remittances and exports. *—PTI*

Nepal bans Telegram for fuelling fraud

KATHMANDU, 19 JULY

Nepal has blocked messaging app Telegram for allegedly fuelling online fraud and money laundering. The Nepal Telecommunication Authority (NTA) issued a notice ordering all telecommunication service providers to block Telegram with immediate effect on Friday late afternoon. "As the number of online frauds through the Telegram App operating in Nepal is continuously increasing, and it has been understood that there is involvement in serious crimes such as money laundering, all relevant telecommunication service providers have been directed through this notice to immediately block/close access to Telegram," the NTA said. *—Agencies*

Myanmar's leader makes rare public speech

BANGKOK, 19 JULY

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, head of Myanmar's military government, made a rare appearance at a ceremony on Saturday honouring General Aung San, the father of jailed former leader Aung San Suu Kyi. This marked his first attendance at Martyrs' Day since the army ousted Suu Kyi in February 2021. As the military government prepares for elections amid ongoing conflict with armed opposition groups, their commitment to the event is seen as an attempt to legitimise their rule. Suu Kyi remains absent from the ceremony for a fifth consecutive year, serving a 27-year prison term on charges perceived as politically motivated. The military government has claimed control over less than half the country, while opposition forces continue to resist, amid rising casualties and arrests since the coup. *—PTI*

Trump sues WSJ, Murdoch for $10B

WSJ claimed Prez wrote a sex letter to Epstein

WASHINGTON, 19 JULY

US President Donald Trump filed a $10 billion lawsuit against The Wall Street Journal and media mogul Rupert Murdoch Friday, a day after the newspaper published a story claiming that he wrote a sexually explicit letter to alleged sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein.

The move came shortly after the Justice Department asked a federal court on Friday to unseal grand jury transcripts in Epstein's sex trafficking case.

Trump had promised to sue the Wall Street Journal almost immediately after the paper put a new spotlight on his well-documented relationship with Epstein by publishing an article that described a sexually suggestive letter that allegedly bore Trump's name and was included in a 2003 album compiled for Epstein's 50th birthday.

Trump denied writing the letter, calling the story "false, malicious, and defamatory."

The suit, filed in filed in federal court in Miami, accuses the paper and its reporters of having "knowingly and recklessly" published "numerous false, defamatory, and disparaging statements," which, it alleges, caused "overwhelming financial and reputational harm" to the President.

US President Donald Trump
PHOTO: PTI

Media mogul Rupert Murdoch
PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

"This lawsuit is filed not only on behalf of your favourite President, me, but also in order to continue standing up for ALL Americans who will no longer tolerate the abusive wrongdoings of the Fake News Media," Trump wrote on Truth Social.

A spokesperson for Dow Jones, the Journal's publisher, responded Friday night, "We have full confidence in the rigor and accuracy of our reporting, and will vigorously defend against any lawsuit."

The letter revealed by The Wall Street Journal was reportedly collected by Epstein's girlfriend Ghislaine Maxwell.

Earlier, Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche filed motions in a federal court, following Trump's directive, urging them to unseal the Epstein transcripts as well as those in the case against Maxwell, who was convicted of luring teenage girls to be sexually abused by Epstein. *—PTI*

Venezuela swaps jailed spies for Salvador deportees

Venezuela released 10 jailed Americans Friday in exchange for some 300 of its migrants deported by the US to El Salvador months ago under the Trump administration's immigration crackdown. Venezuelan authorities detained nearly a dozen US citizens in the second half of 2024 and linked them to alleged plots to destabilise the country.

Microsoft drops Chinese teams for US Defence works

The Department of Defence (DoD) will be conducting a two-week review of its digital infrastructure after Microsoft announced it would no longer use "China-based engineering teams" to provide technical support for DoD. The decision follows an investigative report alleging that Microsoft had been relying on engineers in China to help maintain the DOD's computer systems.

Named after me, says Trump while signing GENIUS Act

Trump on Friday signed into Law S. 1582 GENIUS Act, saying they named it after him. The Act stablishes a regulatory framework for stablecoins. The White House in an official statement said, "The President signed into law: S. 1582, the Guiding and Establishing National Innovation for US Stablecoins Act or GENIUS Act, which provides for the regulation of

Scribes among 13 held during protests in Cincinnati

Police in Cincinnati arrested at least 13 people, including two journalists, after demonstrators protesting the immigration detention of a former hospital chaplain blocked a two-lane bridge carrying traffic over the Ohio River. Video from the demonstration in Cincinnati Thursday night shows several tense moments, including when an officer punches a protester several times as police wrestle him to the

Pakistan Finance Minister meets US officials

Pakistan and the US have expressed optimism that the ongoing trade talks would yield positive outcomes, as Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb held meetings with American officials in Washington to enhance trade ties. Pakistan faces a 29 per cent tariff on exports to the US under President Donald Trump's measures against nations with large trade surpluses with his country.

Syria, Israel agree to ceasefire again

MAZRAA, 19 JULY

US envoy to Syria Tom Barrack said early Saturday that Israel and Syria had agreed to a ceasefire following Israel's intervention this week in fighting between Syrian government forces and Bedouin tribes and armed groups from the Druze minority.

The announcement came as renewed clashes continued between Druze groups and Bedouin clans in Syria's southern Sweida province, leaving tens of thousands of people displaced in a worsening humanitarian crisis.

Government forces had withdrawn from Sweida following a separate ceasefire agreed upon with Druze groups on Wednesday after Israel launched dozens of airstrikes on convoys of government fighters and even struck the Syrian Defence Ministry headquarters in central Damascus. However, the truce shattered late Thursday.

Barrack said in a statement on X that the new ceasefire between Israel and Syria was supported Turkey, Jordan and other neighbouring countries and called for "Druze, Bedouins, and Sunnis to put down their weapons and together with other minorities build a new and united Syrian identity in peace and prosperity with its neighbours."

Hours earlier Syria's interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa had announced that the government would send a "specialised force to break up clashes and resolve the conflict on the ground" in Sweida.

Hundreds have been killed, with the United Nations saying that nearly 80,000 people were displaced altogether since clashes started on Sunday. *—PTI*

Members of a Syrian Druze family wave goodbye as they cross back into Syria at the Israeli-Syrian border, in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights town of Majdal Shams
PHOTO: PTI

Israel shoots dead 32 Palestinians near aid sites

DEIR AL-BALAH, 19 JULY

Israeli troops opened fire on Saturday toward crowds of Palestinians seeking food from distribution hubs run by a US and Israeli-backed group in southern Gaza, killing at least 32 people, according to witnesses and hospital officials.

The two incidents occurred near hubs operated by the US backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation.

The two governments are seeking to replace the traditional UN-led aid distribution system in Gaza, saying that Hamas militants siphon off supplies. The UN denies the allegation.

Most the deaths occurred as Palestinians massed in the Teina area, around 3kms away from a GHF aid distribution centre east of the city of Khan Younis.

Mahmoud Mokeimar, an eyewitness, said he was walking with masses of people — mostly young men — toward the food hub. Troops fired warning shots as the crowds advanced, before opening fire toward the marching people.

"It was a massacre … the occupation opened fire at us indiscriminately," he said. *—PTI*

Russia hits Ukraine with 300 drones

KYIV, 19 JULY

Russia launched a massive attack on Ukraine overnight into Saturday with hundreds of drones, killing at least one person, as part of a stepped-up bombing campaign.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy posted on X, saying Russia fired over 300 drones, along with more than 30 cruise missiles.

One person died when Russian forces attacked the Black Sea port city of Odesa with more than 20 drones and a missile, the city's mayor, Hennadii Trukhanov, said, while five people were rescued when a fire broke out in a residential high-rise building.

According to Zelenskyy, six other people were wounded in the attack on Odesa, including a child, and critical infrastructure was damaged in Ukraine's northeastern Sumy region.

He also thanked international leaders for understanding the importance of promptly implementing "our agreements," aimed at boosting Ukraine's defense capabilities.

Russia has been intensifying its long-range attacks on Ukrainian cities. It now often batters Ukraine with more drones in a single night than it did during some entire months in 2024, and analysts say the barrages are likely to escalate. *—PTI*

A residential building burns following a Russian air attack in Odesa, Ukraine
PHOTO: PTI

30 injured as vehicle mows through LA crowd

LOS ANGELES, 19 JULY

- The incident, which occurred outside a nightclub, left seven critically wounded. Eyewitnesses heard gunshots, and one patient was found to have a gunshot wound

A vehicle careened into a crowd waiting to enter a nightclub on a busy boulevard in East Hollywood early Saturday, injuring 30 people, with at least seven in critical condition. The incident occurred around 2.00am on Santa Monica Boulevard, near North Vermont Avenue, an area well-known for its vibrant nightlife.

According to Captain Adam Van Gerpen, public information officer for the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD), the victims included a majority of women eagerly awaiting entry into the venue. The vehicle also collided with a taco truck and a valet stand. Eyewitnesses reported hearing gunshots, and one patient was found to have a gunshot wound.

Authorities are investigating whether the driver is connected to this shooting.

Emergency services transported victims to local hospitals and trauma centres, with seven individuals classified as critically injured, six in serious condition, and ten described as stable. Van Gerpen noted the chaotic scene as bystanders rushed to assist the injured. A significant police presence remains as the LAPD conducts an extensive investigation into the incident. *—Agencies —PTI*

21 killed, 34 injured in Iran bus accident

TEHRAN, 29 JULY

At least 21 people have died and 34 others have been injured after a bus overturned in southern Iran, according to state media reports on Saturday. The incident occurred near Shiraz, the capital of Fars province,at 11.05am, prompting immediate response from rescue teams. Masoud Abed, head of Fars province's emergency organisation, stated that rescue operations are ongoing, with final casualty figures expected after an investigation. The cause of the accident is currently under scrutiny. Iran has a troubling road safety record, with nearly 17,000 annual fatalities attributed to lax adherence to safety measures, ageing vehicles, and insufficient emergency services. *—PTI*

Deadly monsoon rains slammed Punjab, flattening buildings, flooding cities, and killing 63 people in just one day
PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Pakistan rains kill 65 in one day as toll hits 180

LAHORE, 19 JULY

Severe monsoon rains in Pakistan's Punjab province have left 65 people dead and nearly 300 injured within the last 24 hours, according to provincial officials. This brings the nationwide death toll to at least 180 since late June.

The torrential downpours on Thursday resulted in flooding and numerous building collapses, primarily attributed to the roofs of inadequately constructed homes failing. Lahore reported 15 fatalities, while Faisalabad saw nine, with several other deaths recorded in Okara, Sahiwal, and Pakpattan.

Rescue teams employed boats to evacuate families from riverside villages.

"Children were screaming for help," recounted local farmer Tariq Mehbood Bhatti, describing desperate scenes of residents stranded on rooftops. *—Agencies*

South Korea's former president Yoon indicted on martial law charges

SEOUL, 19 JULY

South Korea's former president Yoon Suk Yeol has been indicted on additional criminal charges related to his controversial imposition of martial law, following his formal removal from office three months prior. Yoon's latest indictments will extend his time in prison for up to six months as he prepares for trial at the Seoul Central District Court.

Independent counsel Cho Eun-suk's team has accused Yoon of abuse of power for summoning only select Cabinet members to approve his emergency martial law, a process that legally requires the agreement of all members. Furthermore, Yoon faces charges of fabricating official documents regarding the martial law declaration, which he later destroyed.

After his martial law declaration, Yoon attempted to deploy troops to the opposition-controlled National Assembly, only for lawmakers to vote down the decree, leading to his impeachment. Yoon argued that the move was a desperate response to the actions of the main liberal opposition Democratic Party. Earlier this year, he was arrested on charges of rebellion, potentially punishable by life imprisonment or death. *—PTI*

Yoon Suk Yeol
PHOTO: X

Congo and Rwanda sign deal to end fighting

DAKAR, 19 JULY

Congo and Rwanda-backed rebels on Saturday signed a declaration of principles in Qatar to end decades-long fighting in eastern Congo that commits them to a permanent ceasefire and a comprehensive peace agreement to be signed in one month.

A final peace deal is to be signed no later than 18 August, and it "shall align with the Peace Agreement between Congo and Rwanda" facilitated by the US in June, according to a copy of the declaration seen by The Associated Press.

The agreement of principles touches on most of the highlights of the peace deal Congo and Rwanda signed 27 June. It is the first direct commitment by both side since the rebels seized two key cities in eastern Congo in a major advance.

Backed by neighbouring Rwanda, the M23 is the most prominent of more than 100 armed groups fighting for control in Congo's mineral-rich east. With 7 million people displaced in Congo, the UN has called the conflict "one of the most protracted, complex, serious humanitarian crises on Earth".

It was not immediately clear what the specific terms of a final peace agreement would be. M23 had been pushing for the release of its members held by Congo's army, many of them facing the death sentence. Congo had requested the withdrawal of the rebels from seized territories. *—PTI*

AMID TRUMP'S TARIFFS

Japan's PM Ishiba faces uphill battle in Upper House election

TOKYO, 19 JULY

Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba faces an increasingly uphill battle in Sunday's Upper House election, and a loss could worsen political instability at a time of daunting challenges, such as rising prices and high US tariffs.

A poor performance would not immediately trigger a change of government but it would deepen uncertainty over his fate and Japan's future path.

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party suffered a humiliating loss in a Lower House election in October as its usual supporters registered their dissent over corruption scandals and high prices.

The election, which comes amid an emerging populist right and xenophobia leaves Ishiba with a low bar — a simple majority. *—PTI*

PM uses Fukushima mud to show safety

Decontaminated but slightly radioactive soil from Fukushima was delivered Saturday to the Japanese Prime Minister's office to be reused in an effort to showcase its safety. This is the first soil to be used, aside from experiments, since the 2011 nuclear disaster when the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant suffered a cataclysmic meltdown following an earthquake and tsunami that left large amounts of radioactive materials spewing

PHOTO: PTI

Central Bank of India's net profit sees 33% rise

NEW DELHI, 19 JULY

State-owned Central Bank of India on Saturday posted a 33 per cent growth in net profit at Rs 1,169 crore during the first quarter of this financial year, aided by improvement in core income and decline in bad debts. The Mumbai-based bank had earned a net profit of Rs 880 crore in the same quarter of the previous fiscal year. The total income rose to Rs 10,374 crore during the June quarter of 2025-26, from Rs 9,500 crore in the same quarter of FY25, Central Bank of India said in a regulatory filing. Interest earned by the bank improved to Rs 8,589 crore, as compared to Rs 8,335 crore in the June quarter FY25. *—PTI*

HDFC Bank's net profit dips by 1.31%

MUMBAI, 19 JULY

HDFC Bank on Saturday posted a 1.31 per cent decline in its consolidated net profit to Rs 16,258 crore for the June 2025 quarter. The lender had reported a net profit of Rs 16,475 crore in the year-ago period. On a standalone basis, the country's largest private sector lender reported a net profit of Rs 18,155 crore for the reporting quarter, up from Rs 16,174 crore a year ago. Its total income jumped to Rs 99,200 crore in the June quarter from Rs 83,701 crore in the year-ago period. The total expenditure stood at Rs 63,467 crore against Rs 59,817 crore in the same period of the preceding fiscal, while net interest margin narrowed to 3.35 per cent from 3.46 per cent in the first quarter of FY25. *—PTI*

Punjab & Sind Bank Q1 net profit surges 48%

NEW DELHI, 19 JULY

State-owned Punjab & Sind Bank on Saturday reported a 48 per cent jump in net profit to Rs 269 crore during the first quarter of this financial year, aided by improvement in core income and decline in bad debts. The lender had earned a net profit of Rs 182 crore in the same quarter of the previous fiscal year. The total income rose to Rs 3,379 crore during the June 2025 quarter from Rs 2,846 crore in the same quarter of FY25, Punjab & Sind Bank said in a regulatory filing. Interest earned by the bank improved to Rs 2,911 crore compared to Rs 2,652 crore in the June quarter of FY25. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

India Cements reports net loss of Rs 132.90 cr

CHENNAI, 19 JULY

The India Cements Ltd, a subsidiary of UltraTech Cement Ltd, an Aditya Birla Group company, reported a consolidated net loss of Rs 132.90 crore for the April-June 2025 quarter, the company said on Saturday. The city-based cement maker had posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 58.47 crore during the corresponding quarter of the previous financial year. For the year ended March 31, 2025, the consolidated net loss stood at Rs 143.68 crore, the company said in a regulatory filing. The consolidated total income for the quarter under review was Rs 1,033.85 crore, compared to Rs 1,042.27 crore in the same quarter last year. For the financial year ended 31 March, 2025, consolidated total income stood at Rs 4,357.31 crore. *—PTI*

India's 1st semiconductor chip to be unveiled in 2025

Indian electronics export hits $40B, marking an 8-fold growth

Ashwini Vaishnaw PHOTO: PTI

HYDERABAD, 19 JULY

Union Electronics and Information Technology Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has said the country's first domestically produced semiconductor chip is expected to be released this year.

Speaking at the 85th foundation day celebrations of Keshav Memorial Educational Society here on Friday, he said India is poised to become a significant global player in the semiconductor industry.

Today, some of the most complex chips are designed in cities, including Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Pune, Gurugram and Chennai, he said.

"Now, we are starting the manufacturing of semiconductor chips. We have already approved six semiconductor plants. Their construction is going on. We will have the first Made in India chip in 2025," he said.

- Vaishnaw said, as part of the India AI Mission, free datasets and others are being uploaded. As many as one million people are being trained in use of AI.

Vaishnaw said, as part of the India AI Mission, free datasets and others are being uploaded. As many as one million people are being trained in use of AI.

Vaishnaw also said India would be among the top two economies in the world by 2047.

Noting that the world is going through a big change, he said the western countries which were dominating the economy are now being replaced by the "eastern hemisphere".

Additionally, India's electronics exports have soared past USD 40 billion, marking an eight-fold growth during the last 11 years, Vaishnaw said on Saturday.

He also highlighted that the domestic electronics production has gone up by six times.

Addressing the 14th Convocation of IIT Hyderabad, near here, Vaishnaw also emphasised the rapid progress of India's first bullet train project, which is expected to become operational by August or September 2027.

Looking ahead, Vaishnaw said the first Made in India semiconductor chip, on a commercial scale, will be manufactured this year. *—PTI*

WITH 50-50 STAKE

Jio, Allianz to launch reinsurance JV in India

NEW DELHI, 19 JULY

Jio Financial Services Limited (JFSL) and Germany's Allianz Group, via its wholly owned subsidiary Allianz Europe BV, have entered into a binding agreement to form a 50:50 domestic reinsurance joint venture aimed at serving India's rapidly expanding insurance market.

This partnership follows Allianz's recent separation from Bajaj Finserv and is set to combine JFSL's deep understanding of the Indian market and strong digital infrastructure with Allianz's global reinsurance expertise and advanced underwriting capabilities. The new venture will draw on Allianz's existing portfolios Allianz Re and Allianz Commercial and will benefit from its international experience in risk pricing, selection, and portfolio management.

Pending regulatory and statutory approvals, the joint venture is expected to enhance insurers' risk management by offering competitive reinsurance capacity and robust technical support, contributing to a more resilient insurance ecosystem in the country.

In addition, the two companies have signed a non-binding agreement to explore joint ventures in both general and life insurance, also on a 50:50 basis. *—PTI*

IPO market sees 108 deals worth $4.6B in 2025: EY

NEW DELHI, 19 JULY

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Indian Initial Public Offering (IPO) activities in the first half of 2025 saw a total of 108 deals, raising USD 4.6 billion, according to a report from EY.

This reflects a 30 per cent drop in transaction volume compared to the previous period, indicating a resilient market despite challenges.

The report highlights that while the number of companies entering the public markets has decreased, fundraising proceeds have only slightly dipped by 2 per cent. This suggests a preference for quality over quantity as issuers and investors adopt a more selective approach, focussing on optimal market timing and valuation strategies.

The current cautious atmosphere is influenced by ongoing global uncertainties and geopolitical tensions, prompting several high-profile firms to delay their listings or reassess their valuations.

However, there remains a robust pipeline of IPOs set to debut in the latter half of 2025, as many companies strategically await improved market conditions.

- The report highlights that while the number of companies entering the public markets has decreased, fundraising proceeds have only slightly dipped by 2 per cent.

The regulatory environment remains supportive, with many firms gaining necessary approvals, enabling them to launch their offerings when conditions are favourable. The sectors anticipated to drive growth include technology, particularly fintech, & healthcare. Looking forward, market participants are optimistic about enhanced performance in the second half of 2025, attributing this to stabilising macroeconomic conditions, easing inflation, and supportive government initiatives for capital market development.

The combination of improving domestic economic fundamentals and a strong issuer pipeline positions India's IPO market for potential acceleration as investor sentiment improves. *—ANI*

AceVector confidentially submits IPO draft

NEW DELHI, 19 JULY

AceVector, the parent company of e-commerce platform Snapdeal, has confidentially filed draft initial public offering (IPO) papers with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi). The firm announced on Saturday that it has pre-filed its draft red herring prospectus with Sebi and relevant stock exchanges, aiming to raise funds via a proposed IPO.

Based in Gurugram, AceVector also oversees SaaS platform Unicommerce and consumer brand management firm Stellar Brands. Unicommerce made a successful public debut in 2024, witnessing oversubscription of 168.32 times during its IPO.

The company, founded by Kunal Bahl and Rohit Bansal, chose the confidential filing route, which allows for delayed public disclosure of IPO specifics. This method is increasingly popular among Indian companies, offering flexibility in navigating IPO strategies. Recent users of this approach include firms such as INOX Clean Energy & food delivery giant Swiggy. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

RRP, CYGR to launch Rs 430 cr drone plant

MUMBAI, 19 JULY

RRP Defence has announced a partnership with French firm CYGR to establish a drone manufacturing facility in Navi Mumbai, with an initial investment of Rs 430 crore.

The collaboration aims to deliver next-generation drones for tactical, surveillance, and industrial applications, combining French-American technology with Indian manufacturing expertise. The facility will produce nano drones, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance drones, and hand-launched fixed-wing drones, targeting India's defence, homeland security, and industrial sectors.

The investment is expected to scale up to $100 million in subsequent phases. According to RRP Defence Chairman Rajendra Chodankar, the initiative will support high-skill employment and bolster India's aerospace exports.

"By combining our manufacturing strength with CYGR's world-class technologies, we're creating systems tailored for India's unique needs," Chodankar said.

CYGR France Director George El Aily added, "This partnership is not only about technology transfer, but also co-developing future-ready solutions for India's defence and surveillance ecosystem."

The facility marks a significant step in strengthening India's indigenous drone capabilities and strategic self-reliance. *—PTI*

India-EFTA to begin on 1 October: Goyal

NEW DELHI, 19 JULY

India's free trade agreement with the four-nation European bloc EFTA will come into effect on 1 October, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal announced on Saturday.

The Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) was signed on 10 March 2024 after 16 years of negotiations. Under the deal, EFTA members Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein have pledged to invest USD 100 billion in India over 15 years, creating an estimated 1 million direct jobs.

In return, India will gradually reduce or eliminate tariffs on 82.7 per cent of its product lines, covering 95.3 per cent of EFTA exports, including high-end goods like Swiss watches, chocolates, biscuits, and cut diamonds.

Indian consumers will benefit from lower prices on many luxury goods as tariffs are phased out over a decade.

In services, India has opened 105 sub-sectors and gained commitments across over 100 sub-sectors from each EFTA country.

Key areas include IT, legal, R&D, accounting, and health services.

With Switzerland as the bloc's largest trade partner, the agreement also opens new avenues for Indian exporters to access EU markets via Swiss firms, further boosting bilateral trade, which reached USD 24.4 billion in 2024–25. *—PTI*

INVESTMENT SECTOR GROWS BY 12.6%: REPORT

NEW DELHI, 19 JULY

Despite witnessing a slight drop of 1.4 per cent in business investment confidence, India maintained the highest year-on-year confidence growth among 32 economies surveyed in Q3 2025, with a robust 12.6 per cent rise, according to the D&B Global Business Investment Confidence Index of Dun & Bradstreet, a data and analytics firm. The report said, the Global Business Investment Confidence Index fell 13.1 per cent quarter-on-quarter for Q3 2025. The drop in confidence is broad-based, with businesses reporting sharp declines in all five sub-indices, compared with Q2 2025. The report highlights that nearly half of businesses reported supply chain stability as very important to determining investments for Q3 2025. *—ANI*

Tea exports rise 2.85% to 257.88M kg in FY25: Tea Board

KOLKATA, 19 JULY

India has recorded a 2.85 per cent increase in tea exports during the 2024-25 financial year, with shipments rising from 250.73 million kilograms (kgs) to 257.88 million kgs, according to official Tea Board data.

North India reported a noteworthy surge in export volume, with figures hitting 161.20 million kgs – an increase of 8.15 per cent from 149.05 million kgs in the previous financial year. Conversely, South India saw a decrease, with exports falling by 4.92 per cent to 96.68 million kgs from 101.68 million kgs in FY23-24.

In terms of value, the average price per kilogram of Indian tea exports rose to Rs 290.97, marking a 12.65 per cent increase from Rs 258.30 from the prior year. The total tea exports for the calendar year 2024 reached 256.17 million kilograms, reflecting a 10.57 per cent rise from 2023.

Notably, North India accounted for 155.49 million kilograms while South India contributed 100.68 million kilograms, indicating growth of 10.28 per cent and 11.02 per cent respectively over the last year, as per the latest data from the Tea Board. *—PTI*

The average price per kilogram of Indian tea exports rose to Rs 290.97, marking a 12.65 per cent increase from previous year PHOTO: PTI

CAUGHT ON COLDPLAY CAM

Astronomer CEO sent on a 'leave' over 'affair'

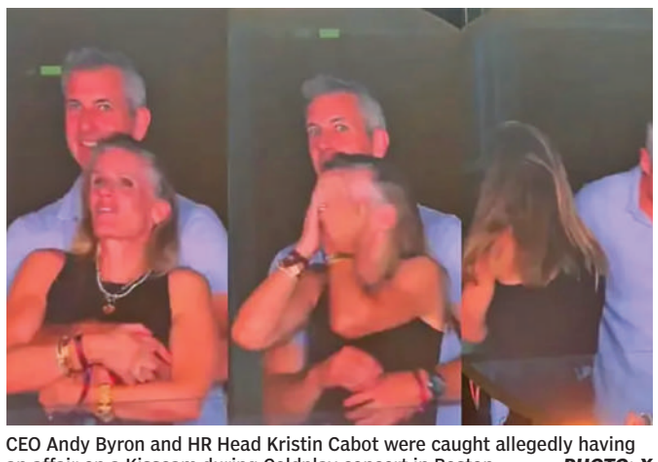
BENGALURU, 19 JULY

The US tech company Astronomer has said it will probe into the alleged affair of its CEO and an employee on Saturday.

A viral Kisscam video from Coldplay's recent concert showed Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Andy Byron and HR Chief Kristin Cabot were spotted sharing an intimate moment during a recent Coldplay concert in Boston on Wednesday.

According to the company, the board of directors have started a probe into the alleged affair between Byron and Cabot.

Byron was allegedly sent on break, and his duties were temporarily assigned to Pete DeJoy, co-founder and Chief Product Officer, said the company on Saturday.



CEO Andy Byron and HR Head Kristin Cabot were caught allegedly having an affair on a Kisscam during Coldplay concert in Boston PHOTO: X

The company in a post on X said that the company is committed to values and culture that it's has been handed down since its founding. It added that, "Our leaders are expected to set the standard in both conduct and accountability. The Board of Directors has initiated a formal investigation into this matter and we will have additional details to share very shortly."

- A viral Kisscam video from Coldplay's recent concert showed CEO Andy Byron and HR Chief Kristin Cabot were spotted sharing an intimate moment during a recent Coldplay concert.

The company said that Byron is yer to release a statement regarding the incident.

It added that another employee from the company Alyssa Stoddard, was mistaken as the woman who was seen in the video. Releasing a statement that neither Stoddard nor any other employees were present in that video. *—Agencies*

Byju's defamation threat a diversion bid: Glas Trust

NEW DELHI, 19 JULY

US-based lender agent Glas Trust has alleged that Byju's founders' plan to file a defamation case is an attempt to distract from facts after several court orders against them.

The legal counsel of Byju's founders, J Michael McNutt, rejected the allegations levelled by Glas Trust, calling it "incomplete and misleading".

The counsel of Byju's founders, Byju Raveendran and Divya Gokulnath, on Thursday said they are gearing up to file an over USD 2.5 billion suit against Glas Trust and others for damage to their reputation & business.

"Byju Raveendran's latest act of threatening defamation claims against GLAS Trust and the Term Loan B Lenders is a transparent attempt to distract from the facts, coming on the heels of a US federal court holding him in contempt. The fact of the matter is that every court to consider the issues has ruled against Raveendran and his cohorts," Glas said.

Byju's founders have, however, contested Glas claims. Glas now controls Byju's Alpha, which was a special-purpose financing vehicle established by the edtech firm to receive Term Loan B funds.

Byju's Alpha has filed a lawsuit against Byju Raveendran, his co-founder and wife Divya Gokulnath, and his consigliere Anita Kishore, alleging that each of them co-orchestrated and executed a lawless scheme to conceal and steal USD 533 million of loan proceeds. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X/@THEEGALA

Sahith Theegala misses cut at Portrush

PORTRUSH, 19 JULY

Golfer Sahith Theegala may have missed the cut at the British Open, but he is happy to be back in action after a two-month layoff due to injuries. Theegala (75-74), who made an early exit at Royal Portrush, had suffered injuries earlier this year that saw him play indifferently and miss a few cuts. He withdrew from the Truist Championship and took a two-month rest to allow his body to recover. "It felt good playing once again. Getting healthy after the 'oblique' pain and the neck injury was the top priority. After a good 2024, there were high hopes, but injuries were frustrating," said Theegala, on a day when Indo-British golfer Aaron Rai (69-72) and fellow Indian-American Akshay Bhatia (73-68) cut in T-26th place.—*PTI*

UK backs London 2029 World Championship bid

LONDON, 19 JULY

The British government has announced its support of London's bid to host the 2029 athletics world championships. London hosted the biannual premier track-and-field event in 2017 at the London Stadium, which also held the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2012 Olympic Games. The plan is to stage the 2029 World Cup at the same venue. Saturday's announcement included the government's support of a bid for Britain to host the 2029 World Para Athletics Championships."Subject to funding from partners being confirmed, the government has agreed to provide significant funding for both bids, reflecting the UK's ambition to once again bring the world's greatest athletes to UK shores," it said in a statement.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Shami named in Bengal's 50 member probables

KOLKATA, 19 JULY

Veteran India pacer Mohammed Shami, who has been out of action since IPL 2025 and is not part of India's ongoing Test tour of England, was on Saturday named in Bengal's 50-member list of probables for the upcoming domestic season. The list, released by the Cricket Association of Bengal, also includes pacer Akash Deep and top-order batter Abhimanyu Easwaran, who are both currently touring England with the Indian team. It also includes right-arm seamer Mukesh Kumar and senior batter Anustup Majumdar, who is likely to lead Bengal again.—*PTI*

Puja Pujara's memoir on life with husband gets UK launch

LONDON, 19 JULY

'The Diary of a Cricketer's Wife', penned by Puja Pujara, capturing the journey of her husband Cheteshwar, found a hallowed introduction place at the Lord's Cricket Ground library, and the author termed the book as "something for everyone." In the book, Puja narrates the achievements and struggles of the Indian batter's international career that spanned between 2010 and 2023 from a wife's off-field perspective. "It was a real honour to be invited to ring the bell at the Home of Cricket (during Day 3 of the third Test between India and England) and also present a copy of this memoir at Lord's," said Pujara after the formal presentation of the book at the library. —*PTI*

Gill's real test starts now with India trailing 1-2: Chappell

Shubman Gill

LONDON, 19 JULY

Former Australia captain Greg Chappell on Saturday believes Shubman Gill has displayed greatness with the bat and shown glimpses of his potential as a young captain, but said his real test begins now with India trailing 1-2 in the five-match Test series against England.

India lost the third Test against England at Lord's by 22 runs to go 1-2 down in the series. The two teams will face off in the fourth Test of the Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy at Manchester starting July 23.

"As India prepares for the final two Tests of their series in England, the spotlight now shines firmly on their 25-year-old captain, Shubman Gill. A bright young talent, he has shown greatness with the bat and glimpses of leadership potential, but this moment will define his trajectory as a Test captain."It's not an easy environment in which to grow, but it's the one he's in - and the stakes couldn't be higher," Chappell wrote in his column in ESPNcricinfo.com.

Chappell wants Gill to set the tone for the side with his actions. "Gill must define what sort of team he wants India to be. The captain sets the tone - not just with words, but with actions, clarity of purpose, and visible standards. "That means demanding discipline in the field. India cannot afford to slip back into being a poor fielding side. The best teams are superb in the field. They don't give easy runs. They don't drop chances," he wrote.

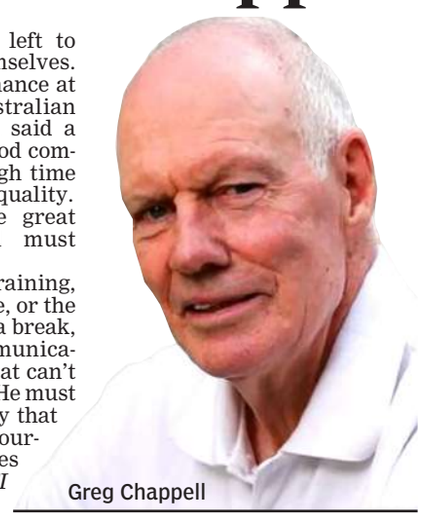
Chappell wants Gill to be firm in picking the side he feels can win a match for him.

"The selectors and Gill must pick and stick. He must identify the core group of players he trusts, lay out a clear game plan, and communicate individual roles within it. Every player should know what is expected of them and where they fit in.

"Too often, in teams that struggle, players are left to work it out for themselves. That can't be left to chance at this level," the Australian great wrote. Chappell said a captain should be a good communicator, and it's high time Gill should adopt that quality.

"Great captains are great communicators. Gill must become one quickly.

Whether it's during training, in the middle of a game, or the dressing room during a break, clear and calm communication is essential."His bat can't always do the talking. He must learn to speak in a way that aligns the group, encourages belief, and creates trust," he said. —*PTI*



Greg Chappell

R&A does away with tradition of having a crew rank bunkers

It's a change for us, but we think a good one, said Mark

PORTRUSH, 19 JULY

BRITISH OPEN

It only took two holes for Jon Rahm to hit into his first bunker in the British Open
PHOTO: X/@JONRAHM

It only took two holes for Jon Rahm to hit into his first bunker in the British Open and that's how long it took caddie Adam Hayes to realize the R&A had decided to end a tradition unlike any other at the major championships on Saturday.

This is nothing that merits hazardous pay. Hayes has been caddying for more than 20 years, and it's part of the job.

But at the British Open, it was always different. Dating to 1984 at St. Andrews, what is now the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA) has sent a crew to the Open, where one person walked with each group and raked the bunkers in a trained, uniform fashion.

"I looked around and was like, Uh, I've got to rake this,'" Hayes said. "I do think it's one of the cool things about The Open, a tradition that, for whatever reason, they cut out. And I think they should bring it back. "It's a change for us, but we think a good one," said Mark Darbon, the new CEO of the R&A. When asked why it was good, he only said, "Several factors. We just think it's a good model for us here at Portrush."

According to Jim Croxton, the CEO of BIGGA, the R&A informed the group after last year's British Open that their services would no longer be needed. "With the growth of on-site greenkeeping teams, as well as the R&A providing top-class agronomy support, the requirement for the additional Support Team has lessened; in recent years, this team was only responsible for match ranking," Croxton said in an email to Golf.com.

Justin Rose narrowly avoids disaster

Justin Rose got off to a blazing start at Portrush on Saturday. After bogeying the opening hole, Rose birdied five of the next six to claw his way back into contention for the second British Open running.

That's what we industry insiders call a stone-cold shank. Thankfully, the mis-hit flew straight into a TV tower instead of a forehead, but Rose was immediately concerned, pulling out of his follow-through and shouting "ohhh, oh my God!" as his shot narrowly avoided disaster. —*PTI*

Justin Rose PHOTO: PTI

Technique has brought best out of Rahul: Shastri

MANCHESTER, 19 JULY

Former India coach Ravi Shastri said tweaking "front-foot" technique has helped KL Rahul to be more productive with the bat against England, and hoped that the senior batter will continue at the top of his game for the "next three or four years".

Rahul has so far scored 375 runs from three Tests with two hundreds and a fifty at an average of 62.50. He is the fourth-highest run-getter behind Shubman Gill, Rishabh Pant, and Jamie Smith. "What I am seeing is a slight adjustment he's made with his front foot, in his stance, and while defending," Shastri told ICC Review. "It just opened up a bit, which allows his bat to come through cleanly. Even when he's hitting it towards mid-wicket, it's the full face of the blade," he added. Shastri said the new technique has also reduced the chances of Rahul getting bowled or leg before, as was the case in the past. "He doesn't need to close the face of the blade, and fall over and get into trouble like he used to in the past. "He would get out leg before, would get out bowled, he would get across too far and then be out leg before as well," he noted. The ball has not seemed around a lot as it often does in English conditions, but Shastri said Rahul has the technical nous to tackle the moving deliveries as well.

He is sound technically, he has been as good as anyone. Especially, it's not moved a lot in the series, but when it's moved, he has had the game to look after that movement. —*PTI*

KL Rahul

CHAWLA STARTS OFF THE BLOCK WITH A WIN IN WORLD 6-RED SNOOKER

MANAMA, 19 JULY

India's Kamal Chawla began his World 6-Red Snooker title defence with a facile 4-2 win over Bahrain's Jaafar Alraees in Group 'A' here on Saturday.

The bespectacled pro from Bhopal jumped to a quick 2-0 lead to put his opponent under pressure.

But lapses in concentration allowed the Bahraini to force his way into the best-of-seven-frame league clash.

However, the 45-year-old Indian recovered quickly to register a comfortable victory.In the U-21 category, Bengaluru-based Mayank Karthik, Aarav Sancheti, and Mayur Garg posted wins in their respective groups. —*PTI*

FREESTYLE GRAND SLAM

Erigaisi bows out in semis after loss to Aronian

LAS VEGAS , 19 JULY

Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi's dream run at the Freestyle Chess Grand Slam ended in the semifinals after a 0-2 defeat to Armenian-turned-American Levon Aronian here. Erigaisi, who became the first Indian to reach the last four stage of the Freestyle Grand Slam with a stellar performance, ran out of steam in the match up against Aronian who is finding his magical touch back in the game. After beating Magnus Carlsen in the play-off for a top-four spot in the prelims and Hikaru Nakamura in the quarterfinals, Arjun failed to convert his chances in the first game.

Aronian, despite being in a difficult position, held firm and was rewarded when Arjun could not capitalise on his advantage.

In the return game, with Aronian needing only a draw to advance, he played subtly to gain a slight advantage out of the opening. As the game settled into a balanced position, it seemed headed for a draw, but Arjun, needing a win to stay in the match, took unwarranted risks that cost him dearly. Hans Moke Niemann of the United States was the other player to reach the finals, defeating compatriot Fabiano Caruana. —*PTI*

Arjun Erigaisi

FIDE Women's WC: Humpy faces Yuxin Song

BATUMI, 19 JULY

Grandmaster Koneru Humpy will start as the favourite in her bid to win her maiden title at the FIDE Women's World Chess Cup when she takes on China's Yuxin Song in the quarterfinals here. Humpy, India's highest-rated woman player and a winner of several major global events, advanced to the last eight along with compatriots Divya Deshmukh, D Harika, and R Vaishali. This marks the first time that four players from a single country have reached the quarterfinals of the competition. With D Harika set to face Divya Deshmukh in an all-Indian clash, at least one Indian is assured of a spot in the semifinals.

R Vaishali, meanwhile, has the toughest task as she faces former women's world champion Tan Zhongyi of China in another quarterfinal. Theoretically, as many as three Indians could make it to the semifinals of this high-stakes event, which also serves as a qualifier for the next Women's Candidates Tournament. —*PTI*

Koneru Humpy

Gaikwad opts out of deal with Yorkshire

LONDON, 19 JULY

India middle-order batter Ruturaj Gaikwad has opted out of the final part of the County Championship for Yorkshire, citing "personal reasons".

The 28-year-old had agreed to a five-game deal, starting with the match against reigning champions Surrey at Scarborough from 22 July.

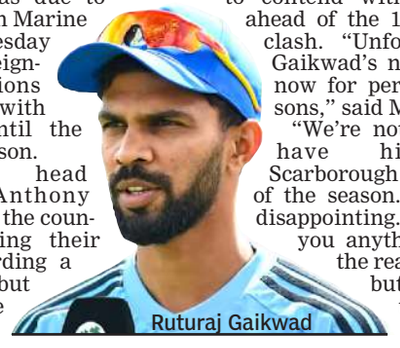
But Yorkshire confirmed in a statement that Gaikwad would not be available.

Gaikwad was due to debut at North Marine Road on Tuesday against the reigning champions and remain with Yorkshire until the end of the season.

Yorkshire head coach Anthony McGrath said the county is assessing their options regarding a replacement, but there are other things to contend with as well ahead of the 10th round clash. "Unfortunately, Gaikwad's not coming now for personal reasons," said McGrath.

"We're not going to have him for Scarborough or the rest of the season. So that's disappointing. I can't tell you anything about the reasons why, but we hope that everything's ok. We've just found out. "We're working behind the scenes on what we can do. But it's only two or three days away, so I'm not sure what we can do at the moment. We're working to try and get a possible replacement, but time pressure is the issue. I can't give you anything more than that at the moment."

Gaikwad, who captains Chennai Super Kings in the Indian Premier League and Maharashtra in the Ranji Trophy. —*PTI*



Ruturaj Gaikwad

SENIOR WOMEN'S NATIONAL CAMP

Hockey India names 40-member core group

BENGALURU, 19 JULY

Hockey India on Saturday announced a 40-member core probable group for the upcoming senior women's national coaching camp, which will be held at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) Centre here from July 21 to August 29.

The camp holds significant importance as the Indian women's hockey team gears up for the women's Asia Cup, set to begin on September 5 in Hangzhou, China.

The tournament will serve as a direct qualification pathway for the 2026 FIH Women's World Cup, with only the champion earning a guaranteed spot.

PHOTO: ANI

All players from the previous camp have been retained, reflecting a continued emphasis on stability and long-term development under the current coaching setup. "This camp comes at a very critical juncture for us. The Asia Cup is not just a prestigious continental tournament, but also a direct route to the 2026 World Cup. We are treating this camp with utmost intensity and focus to ensure we arrive in Hangzhou as a mentally and physically prepared unit," Indian women's hockey team chief coach Harendra Singh said in a release.

The goalkeeping unit features experienced stalwarts Savita, Bichu Devi Kharibam, Bansari Solanki, and Madhuri Kindo, along with rising talent Samiksha Saxena from Assam Hockey, who impressed selectors with her performances at the National Championships earlier this year. —*PTI*

BCCI IS MUCH LIKE A CORPORATE FORCE WITH IPL JUGGERNAUT

MANCHESTER, 19 JULY

It doesn't sell a product, list on stock exchanges, or hold investor calls. This isn't a riddle for you to solve, just something that speaks volume of the power cricket in India holds., In FY24, the Board of Control for Cricket in India, BCCI, posted a staggering income of ₹9, rivaling some of India's top listed companies. What started as a sports administrator now operates with the scale and structure of a corporate giant, its biggest asset being the Indian Premier League., The IPL alone brought in ₹5, reinforcing the tournament's role as Indian cricket's financial engine. With total revenues of ₹27, that is from FY18-22, the BCCI's operations now look nothing less than that of a corporate giant., But since BCCI works differently in comparison to a company, the comparison with India Inc. isn't exact. Nonetheless, what BCCI has achieved with money generation coming from a humble background is not an easy task and is perhaps a journey that may resemble the story of some corporate giants., 741.71 crore, 761 crore in FY24, 411 crore over five years. —*PTI*